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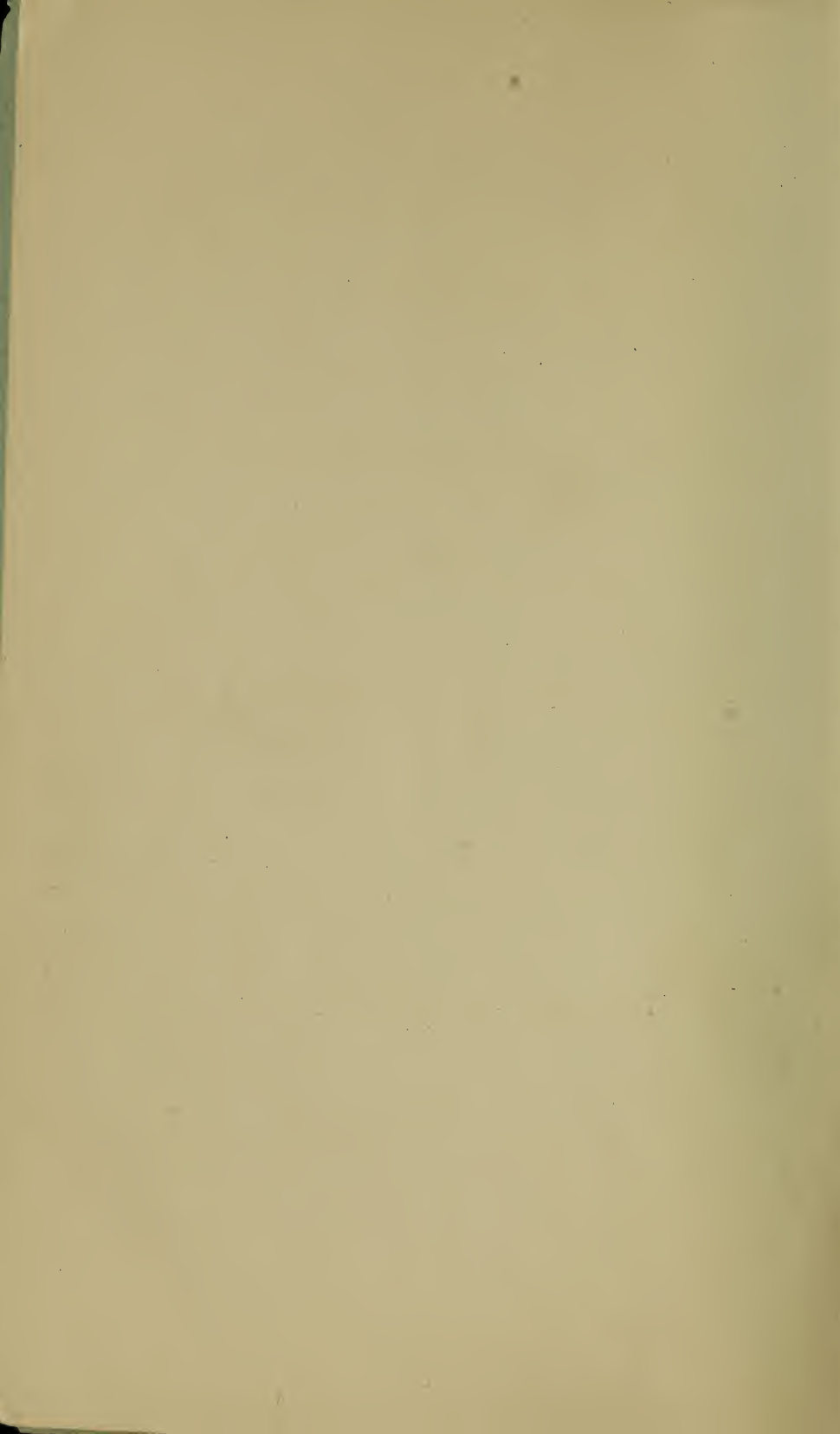
JUDITH;
OR,
THE WIFE OF MANASSEH

A FICTIONAL DRAMA.

BY

S. A. MILLS.





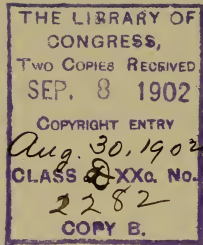
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JUDITH.

CHARACTERS.

ISRAELITES.

JUDITH.....A Prophetess of Bethulia.

ABRAMIE }
and }Judith's Maids.
DINAH. }

GOLTHONIEL.....Chief of the Bethulian Army.

CHABRIS.....One of the Civil Governors of Bethulia.

AZARIAS }
and }Captains under Golthoniel.
RAFAS. }

REUBEN.....A Veteran Soldier of Bethulia.

CARMI, }
JAEI, }Soldiers of Bethulia.
CHARMIS. }

JOACHIM.....Priest of Bethulia.

ADA.....A Woman of Bethulia.

A MOURNER.

CITIZENS OF BETHULIA.

ASSYRIANS.

HOLOFERNES.....Prince of Assyria.

ARZAELE.....His Wife.

VAGAO.....Prime Minister of Assyria.

ZEBDULLA.....Chief Captain of Assyria.

Captains of the Assyrian Army.

Dancers.

Musicians.

JUDITH.

ACT I.

Period.—About 1,000 years B. C.

Time.—Three hours after noon.

Scene.—The battlements of Bethulia, with high and rugged hills in the near and farther distance.

Battlements.—The battlements, about twelve feet wide, form back part of stage and are about ten feet high looking from audience.

From C. of battlements there rises a low square tower, about nine feet square, so that a man can easily walk up and down the battlements past tower, in front of it.

Two closed doors are immediately under tower; these doors form entrance C. Immediately on L. and R. of these doors steps rise from stage to top of battlements.

On L. of tower a ladder rises from battlements to top of tower.

Stage.—A tomb is at R. C. shown by raised horizontal slab.

On L. of steps, which are on L. of doors C., several spears stand, leaning against battlements.

West is beyond L. of stage. South is beyond back of stage.

Entrances.—C., L. 1, L. 2, L. 3, R. 1, R. 2, R. 3.

Discovered on Battlements.—Six soldiers, three each side of tower, moving to and fro on the watch; (Reuben being L. of tower and Charmis half way between R. of tower and wing R.)

On Tower.—Carmi, R. Jael, L. Azarias on top of steps R. Rafas down stage L.

AZARIAS shading his eyes with his right hand, stands on top of steps R. of doors C., looking towards mountains, beyond back right half of stage. Rafas is down stage L.

RAFAS (walks from L. to L. C., then back to L., looks off, then looks towards Azarias).

All is quiet in the city.

AZARIAS (looks toward Rafas).

Yea, and on the hills there is no sign of the enemy.

RAFAS.

'Tis an ominous calm, Azarias.

AZARIAS (reflectively).

Yea, Rafas,—like the desert, before the storm of burning wind and scorching sand. (He walks past tower to steps L. of doors C., and, shading his eyes with his left hand, looks towards mountains, beyond back, left half of stage.)

RAFAS (sighing, walks to L. C. and back to L.).

Ah! Ah! (He looks off left, then turns away disappointed and speaks aside.) No sound!—No life!—This silence! 'Tis weird! unnatural! It haunteth me like some frightful dream! (He rubs his eyes with his left hand.)

AZARIAS (looks towards Rafas and rubs his eyes with his right hand).

The glare! doth it distress thee?

RAFAS.

Sorely!—'Tis as fierce a summer as that of ten years ago. The hot air trembleth, walls split; and the leaves fall from the withered trees.

AZARIAS (on steps L.).

Yea, the heat of noon still oppresseth all life of the earth, though mark, the sun turneth westward. (He points towards L.)

RAFAS (advances to spears, takes one, brings it C. and stands it perpendicularly; the spear's shadow falls towards R.).

My spear throweth a shadow a sword's length or more!

AZARIAS (descends steps, come to R. of Rafas and looks at shadow).

'Tis three hours after mid-day, and four hours past our watch.

RAFAS.

And the first day since the siege began that a watch hath not been relieved to time. (He goes with spear towards other spears.)

AZARIAS (C.).

Four hours! 'Tis long!

RAFAS (in putting spear down, sees Charmis).

Grievous long for yon soldier. (Azarias looks.) Note how he bendeth with the burden of his armor.

AZARIAS.

Like a bough warped by the sun. (In louder voice.) Charmis, rest thee in the shadow of the tower.

CHARMIS.

Thanks! Thanks! my Captain! (Charmis comes to R. of tower and reclines in shade on top of battlements.)

RAFAS (comes down to L. C.)

Thou farest well, Azarias?

AZARIAS (at C.).

Heartily well—and thou?

RAFAS (L. C.).

It troubleth me that our relief cometh not, and no word from Golthoniel. (He goes L. and looks off anxiously.)

JUDITH.

AZARIAS.

'Tis strange he leaveth us in this suspense. (He comes towards Rafas.)

RAFAS (as Azarias comes to him).

Four hours! (They both look off L., Azarias on R. of Rafas.) Hath some mischance occurred? An affair of council?—a move of the enemy?

AZARIAS.

Doubtless some change of plan. (Walks to C.) Let us keep guard and not concern ourselves.

RAFAS.

Aye! (Comes to L. C.) Rather consider the strength of our position.

AZARIAS.

In truth! For eighty days we men of Bethulia have stopped the march of the host of Holofernes!

RAFAS.

And we are still invincible!—(Suddenly struck by a thought, he comes to L. of Azarias.) Azarias! thou didst promise to show me how Golthoniel tricked them with his sword.

AZARIAS.

Well remembered! Thou knowest that training as a scout hath given him an eye keen as the great eagle's?

RAFAS (C.).

I have seen him look at the sun without flinching.

AZARIAS.

Then thou wilt instantly understand. (Azarias draws sword.) He stood with his sword, so. The Assyrians could come at him only one by one in the narrow path. And as each came, Golthoniel fixed his eyes on those of the foe, and the instant the foe's eyes blinked or trembled——

RAFAS (interrupting with excited exclamation).

Ah!

AZARIAS.

Golthoniel ran his man through or cut him down.

RAFAS (walking excitedly with upraised fist to L. C.).

Long live such swordsmen as our chief!

AZARIAS (at C. sheathes sword).

'Twas a mighty example. Since that day our spirits have grown brighter and brighter. (They cross, Azarias to L. C. Rafas to R. C.)

RAFAS.

Indeed the siege could not go better with us. Although the Assyrians *entirely surround* us we have lost but four hundred men.

AZARIAS.

Yet awhile since thou and I began to ask ourselves, Why is our relief delayed and why cometh no message from Golthoniel? (Rafas suddenly becomes crestfallen. Azarias speaks in surprise.) Why? How now?

RAFAS (coming to R. of Azarias)

Despite thy cheering words anxiety clingeth to me. 'Twas born yesternight, when the five thousand went forth. I cannot throw it off me. (Walking to L. and speaking fearfully.) This delay, Azarias! (Looks off left.)

AZARIAS (half carelessly).

Art restless—'tis no more. (Rafas looks off and listens, Azarias watches Rafas.)

AZARIAS (anxiously).

No sign?

RAFAS (sadly).

None.

AZARIAS (throwing off his anxiety).

Would that thou and I were with the five thousand! (He comes C.; Rafas comes to L. C.) (With intensity.) To press on through the night, to steal like spirits to the lines of the Assyrians, to charge through them, to speed on to our main army and to bring it hither,—'its victory! (They cross.)

RAFAS.

Yet the citizens call the five thousand a forlorn hope, and already mourn over them.

AZARIAS (L. C.).

Bah! (This speech to be worked up.) The five thousand will strike the Assyrian circle where the guard is weakest, and cutting their way through, the glitter of their swords will quickly crown the southern mountain (pointing), and evoke thunders of welcome from the army of Judea!

RAFAS (hurries to R. of Azarias and puts his left hand on Azarias right shoulder).

(This speech to be worked up.) Surely! for thou speakest like a soldier and an orator! What a day 'twill be when our brethren return with the might of Israel to give battle to Holofernes! (Azarias, hearing a strange sound, starts and goes a few steps up stage L. listening. Audience hears nothing.)

RAFAS (with surprised and altered manner).

What didst thou hear?

AZARIAS.

'Tis not what I heard—'tis what the sound suggested!

RAFAS.

Methought I heard a mysterious——

AZARIAS.

Yea!——

RAFAS.

A—a—voice? (They look at each other with wonder and inquiry.)

AZARIAS (very solemnly).

Ask the guard to stand quiet. (He goes L., looks off, listening.)

RAFAS.

Reuben, Carmi, Jael, and ye, and ye, attend with your eyes and ears.

REUBEN, CARMi and JAEI (quietly, as they turn).

Aye! Aye! Aye! (They listen.)

(Rafas walks to R., looks off, and listens.)

(All listen; those on right half facing R., those on left half facing L. There is a long wailing moan without L. Those on R. half instantly turn L.)

RAFAS (in alarm, R.).

What cry is that?

AZARIAS (L. in despair; aside).

The voice of my brother. (Looking despairingly on the ground he comes L. C.)

REUBEN.

It soundeth like the wail of wounded. (Rafas comes C., up stage.)

AZARIAS (at L. C., with back to soldiers).

There can be no wounded.

RAFAS (C.).

Nay! there hath been no conflict for ten days. (He goes to L. and looks off.) It seemed to come along the surface of the earth. (Looks towards tower.) Canst thou perceive anything, Carmi?

CARMI (on tower R.).

Nay, my Captain.

RAFAS (L.).

Or thou, Jael?

JABL (on tower L.).

Nothing, my Captain. (Rafas looks towards Azarias as if to speak.)

CARMI.

Most likely 'tis a spy. (Rafas looks towards Carmi.)

REUBEN.

Aye! they have caught him, and he sobs as they tie him to the ground and pile the wood about him.

RAFAS.

But how could a spy enter Bethulia?

AZARIAS (L. C., with his back to the others).

Only by dropping from the clouds. (Soldiers continue watching L. eagerly.)

RAFAS (looks at Azarias and says meditatively).

It can be no spy.

REUBEN (suddenly).

I see who are moaning—two women and two men in rags huddled in a dark gateway. Look! three hundred paces yonder!

RAFAS (turns and looks off).

Yea! (Turns to Azarias.) Azarias! (Azarias takes a step L. and looks.) Behold! past the dark wall.

AZARIAS (looking towards L.).

Aye! (He turns his back to Rafas and stands despondent. Soldiers continue watching L.)

RAFAS (watches Azarias' demeanour with deep concern, then comes to L. of Azarias, and with his R. hand takes Azarias' left arm).

Hath Azarias, the brave Jewish captain, dropped his sword at the trick of a few beggars?

AZARIAS (without turning to Rafas).

Don't mock me Rafas—in a besieged town that moan must *begin* with the beggars.

RAFAS (releases Azarias and speaks with concern).

Thou hast heard it before in thy life?

AZARIAS (looks fixedly at Rafas, then speaks).

'Tis the moan of men lost in the desert!

RAFAS (in whispered consternation).

Not that!

AZARIAS.

Yea—*that*. (He walks to C.)

RAFAS.

I dare not ask—yet I must! (Comes to L. of Azarias.) Thy brother and thyself were lost in the great sand desert. 'Fore Heaven! speak plainly—what is in thy mind?

AZARIAS (in husky voice and agony of recollection).

The desert—the day of fire—of blinded eyes, of parched tongues——

RAFAS (drawing back).

'*Tis thirst!* thou sayest it!

AZARIAS.

The night of fever, of blackness, of desolation, broken by the flapping of huge wings! (Moans without L.) (With a look of horror.) And a moan like that came from my brother, when, at the rising of the sun, his heart stopped. And as I bent over my brother, a cloud came between the sun and me. I turned—a huge vulture! (He turns aside R.)

RAFAS (looking towards Azarias).

Thou hast planted thy fear in *my* breast. The Lord grant thy judgment is mistaken. (Soldiers who have been intently looking towards L. turn to each other, interchange significant glances, point to L., drawing each others attention to L. Soldiers on R. of tower move up closer towards tower. All manifest excitement.)

RAFAS (turning and perceiving soldiers, advances towards Reuben).

Speak, man, speak! What dost thou see?

REUBEN.

I see Golthoniel followed by crowd in sackcloth and ashes.

AZARIAS and RAFAS (in astonishment).

Ah! (They hurry to L. 2 and look off. Azarias on R. of Rafas.)

RAFAS (very excitedly).

Chabris, the Ancient, joineth them; he beckoneth; the crowd presseth upon Golthoniel.

AZARIAS (excited).

He waveth them back—one woman runneth to him with her child in her arms, the other women cling around him,—Chabris and the old men fall on their knees before him and hold up their hands. (He stands in complete despondency.)

RAFAS (with attempted assurance).

Look again Azarias—they point to the hills—they are beseeching him to save them from the Assyrians. 'Tis a panic among the populace!—Look!—Golthoniel and Chabris break from the throng and hasten hither! (Walks to C.) A panic!—is not that the reason our relief did not come?

AZARIAS (walks to L. C.).

But the cause of the panic, Rafas?—the cause?—Why cometh Chabris, one of the city governors, with Golthoniel? (He appeals to Rafas who stands as if struck dumb.)

RAFAS (whispers to himself in fear).

Yea—why?—Why—cometh—Chabris. (There is the growing clamour of an approaching throng, worked up to loud pitch for Golthoniel's entrance. Enter Golthoniel L. 3. He is taller and more imposing than either Azarias or Rafas, and he wears a brighter costume. He stops immediately at entrance. Chabris enters immediately after Golthoniel and stops at entrance.)

CHABRIS.

Stop Golthoniel!—be advised!—To fight on is madness—thou must surrender! (Azarias and Rafas and soldiers start and stop with one accord and strain forward listening. Golthoniel draws sword, walks to back of tomb and holds sword point down on marble slab.)

GOLTHONIEL (facing left).

Citizens of Bethulia!—my first and last words to you! Here, on the tomb of the Prophet, my soldiers and I have sworn never to surrender! (Azarias, Rafas and soldiers give gestures of approval. Soldiers resume sentry march.)

CHABRIS.

The Lord and the Prophets judge between us and thee; for to-day thou shouldst ask peace of Holofernes.

GOLTHONIEL (loudly, defiantly).

With my sword! (He raises sword to perpendicular.)

PICTURE.

(Exit Chabris, L. 3.)

VOICES (without).

We perish!—Oh-h-h! (Azarias and Rafas hurry towards Golthoniel, he sheathes his sword, and looking towards L. stops the advance of Azarias and Rafas by raising his right hand. All three watch left, while noise gradually subsides. Then Golthoniel drops his right hand. Azarias and Rafas hurry to L. of him.)

RAFAS (anxiously).

What doth it mean?

GOLTHONIEL (places his L. hand on Azarias' R. shoulder and R. hand on Rafas' L. shoulder, and comes with them to C).

The Assyrians have cut the aqueduct!—Bethulia is without water!

RAFAS (in horror, going three steps R.).

Oh-h-h!

AZARIAS (in despair, going three steps L.).

I feared it! I knew it! (There is stillness, then Charmis, R. of tower, stands up trying to speak and falls with a loud clatter of armour upon battlements. The two soldiers on R. of tower hurry to Charmis, and one raises his head. Golthoniel, Azarias and Rafas look towards Charmis.)

CHARMIS (despairingly).

Golthoniel! Golthoniel! (Golthoniel hurries up steps R., kneels on one knee R. of Charmis and raises his head.) Azarias and Rafas watch this. Soldiers L. of tower come to front of tower and watch; Carmi and Jael look down R. from top of tower.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Sunstroke! (General sensation.) He dieth—he is dead! (All but Golthoniel uncover their heads; he lays body down, rises, uncovers.) Place him in the first room of the tower—anon his own will come for him. (Four soldiers lift body, descend R. steps with it, carry it through C. doors, then those left on stage cover their heads.)

AZARIAS (aside).

Is this the beginning of the end? (Golthoniel descends R. steps and comes towards C., Rafas goes to meet him, R. of him.)

RAFAS (in half whisper).

How contrived the Assyrians to cut the aqueduct? (Azarias looks towards Golthoniel and Rafas.)

GOLTHONIEL (at C.).

A landslip enabled them to do it. And now every spring and rivulet are guarded by their soldiery.

AZARIAS (coming from L. C. to L. of Golthoniel).

Let us attack them!

GOLTHONIEL.

Nay! Think! Our garrison is but ten thousand. Can we lead them against thirty thousand? And if we do, the main army of the Assyrians will rush upon our city. (Soldiers re-enter through C. doors and resume their places on battlements.)

AZARIAS.

In the five thousand then is our one hope?

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea! God speed their bravest!

AZARIAS (starting).

Why? What knowest thou?

RAFAS (appalled).

Doth fate encompass us?

GOLTHONIEL.

From the great tower I have seen the Assyrians marching to the southern mountain.

AZARIAS.

A surround!

RAFAS.

Have the citizens seen them?

GOLTHONIEL.

Nay! Though many strain their eyes the distance is too great for *them* to distinguish objects.

AZARIAS.

'Tis fortunate, for they are already loud in their lamentations.

RAFAS.

And are filled with fearful presentiments.

GOLTHONIEL.

'Tis clear that each of us foreseeth——

AZARIAS.

Civil strife.

RAFAS.

The mob!

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea—already many suffer from thirst, and were my knowledge added to their sufferings——

RAFAS (in awed whisper).

Tell us!

AZARIAS.

The worst!

GOLTHONIEL.

The citizens have seen nothing; they know not what you two now share with me—the Assyrians came from all sides, column on column, forming a square with our five thousand in the centre.

AZARIAS AND RAFAS.

O-h-h!

GOLTHONIEL.

Summon your heart-strength to bear this news. I fear—I do not say I *know*—but I *fear*, the five thousand are cut down to a man.

RAFAS.

Our plight, then, could not be more desperate—at this time of the year the sun burneth like an oven—— (Motioning his L. hand towards tower.) Rain never falleth—not even a drop of dew!

AZARIAS.

Only the God of Israel can save us! (Enter L. 3. crowd in sackcloth and ashes with white haggard faces.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea, even now, the citizens come to the tomb of the Prophet to beseech the intervention of Heaven. Come with me, Rafas. (Golthoniel and Rafas go out R. 2. Azarias goes L. C. The crowd kneels round tomb and holds up supplicating hands.)

CROWD.

Water! Water! or we die! Water! Water! (Crowd prays silently.)

AZARIAS (to himself at L. C.).

Water! Water! or we die! That cry will be borne on the midnight breeze to the very tent of Holofernes. What is our courage now? What are our swords? The Assyrians will strike not another blow against us. But their chiefs, hearing that cry, will feast and drink and laugh with the women of their harems, hold festivity night and day, waiting their time, till the last of us—the best of us—Golthoniel himself—falleth like a withered sheaf in the furrow, and the vultures sit around the battlements of Bethulia.

REUBEN (loud announcement).

The Priest! (The whole stage and soldiers on battlements uncover heads and kneel. Enter L. 3. Priest followed by two Levites with incense. The priest stands up stage C, it being forbidden for Jewish priests to come close to a dead body or burying place. The Levites stand behind priest.)

PRIEST (up stage C, prays).

God of Israel, hear Thy children! At the tomb of the Prophet Thy faithful people cry to Thee! Hearken unto us oh, Father! or the sons and daughters and babes of Bethulia all perish! (Momentary picture.) (The people pray silently; Azarias rises and remains L. C. Soldiers rise. Enter L. 2. Chabris in sackcloth and ashes. He flings his arms wildly.)

CHABRIS (loudly and excitedly as he walks towards crowd).

Woe, woe, to Bethulia! Why pray ye? The God of Israel hath forsaken us! (His words cause sensation among crowd.)

PRIEST (up stage C.).

Chabris, thou speakest blasphemy; the God of Israel will hear us! (He comes to L. C. Levites with incense retire up stage L.)

CHABRIS (turns from crowd and cries louder as he comes towards priest).

Woe, woe, to the mothers and babes! Woe, woe, to the wives and the maidens! (Some of the crowd rise excitedly. Golthoniel swiftly enters L. 2, confronts Chabris.)

GOLTHONIEL (at L. C., in voice of thunder).

Silence! (Enter Rafas L. 2.)

(Chabris, looking fiercely at Golthoniel, moves back towards crowd, which has become more excited, many having risen from their knees. Azarias goes to L. of Golthoniel; Rafas to R. of Golthoniel. The crowd, breaking into groups of two or three, willingly listens to Chabris, who goes to each group inciting them against Golthoniel. The priest, with praying gesture and eyes raised to Heaven, moves up stage L.)

RAFAS.

He hath terrified the women with his clamour.

AZARIAS.

More! He hath excited and goaded the men!

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea—they regard him, because he is one of the Civil Governors. (Chabris looks towards Golthoniel, then resumes his whispering.)

AZARIAS.

His looks are most evil towards us.

GOLTHONIEL.

Watch! He stirreth up strife!

AZARIAS.

As he whispereth they turn their faces—they hate us!

RAFAS.

Shall we order the watch to seize him?

GOLTHONIEL.

Nay—at present their sympathy is with him. To use force is to throw fuel on the fire he kindleth.

CROWD (which is now worked up to thorough excitement).

Speak! Chabris! Speak! (The priest, greatly alarmed, moves forward from up stage L. to up stage L. C. with deprecating gesture, but the crowd shake their fists at him, and he retires again up stage L.)

CHABRIS (comes to C.).

Men and women! did ye mark the tone of Golthoniel? 'Twas a threat against a citizen! (A subdued growl and threatening gestures from crowd.) What careth he for the poor among ye?

CROWD (in long growling tone).

Nay! Nothing!

CHABRIS.

The rich have water! (The crowd turn with excitement to one another.) The priest hath water! (The crowd gesture threatening towards priest, who gestures "Nay.") Golthoniel and his soldiers have secret stores of water! (There is uproar for a few moments. Chabris holds the crowd back with upraised R. hand; the uproar subsides.) But the poor die, and this woman here prayeth for a cup of water for her babe, and Golthoniel heedeth not. (He points to Ada, who is in the front rank. The crowd is on the impulse to run forward to L.) Wait! (To Ada.) Come forward thou! (Chabris escorts Ada to Golthoniel. She kneels at Golthoniel's feet.)

(To Golthoniel.) Since to me thou callest silence, answer this woman when she beggeth of thee! (Chabris steps up stage towards C. and watches Golthoniel.)

ADA.

Water! Water! for my child! One cup of water or my babe will die! (She sobs over her child.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Good woman, I cannot help thee. (Crowd moves excitedly. Chabris restrains them.) Some citizens have a little store of water. Go beg of them. The soldiers who defend thee have not one measure. (The crowd is appeased.)

CHABRIS (sees change in crowd and comes down stage to R. of Golthoniel).

Do they defend her when babe fainteth in her arms? (The crowd is moved to hostile feeling against Golthoniel.)

GOLTHONIEL (L. C.).

More lives are lost than this babe's, thou cowardly reasoner. Mothers give their sons each time soldiers fall upon the battlements. Mothers gave their sons when the five thousand went forth yesternight. (The crowd is appeased.)

CHABRIS (stepping excitedly to C.).

Yea—gave them, knowing they would not return. Dost think we will again follow thy guidance? Thou didst send them to the slaughter! 'Twas thy blunder. (He takes a step or two up stage and points with L. hand towards mountains over L. half of battlements, causing crowd to move towards him, all listening intently.) With the dawn I left the city, and walked three miles to yonder hill. At every step I risked capture. But I crawled to the summit and hid myself. From thence I saw thirty thousand Assyrians surround and destroy our soldiers. (Everyone but Golthoniel is thunderstruck. Azarias and Rafas shrink, but Golthoniel faces the situation with brave calm.)

PRIEST (comes forward; gasps the words).

Chabris, is this true?

ADA (L. C. springs up pointing upwards L.).

Vultures! Vultures! (Everyone on stage and soldiers on battlements look up L. All but Golthoniel become very excited.)

CARMI (on tower).

Aye! There!

REUBEN.

Here!

VOICES FROM CROWD.

There! Another! Oh! There!

CHABRIS (C., loudly, on top of the excitement).

Flying to the southern mountain, where the Assyrians overwhelmed our brethren. Look! the vultures cover the sky! Who doubted 'tis as I said? Behold the dreadful proof! (The crowd around tomb gives way to lamentations and wringing of hands.)

ADA (L. C.).

Oh-h! my husband! My babe's father!

GOLTHONIEL (comes C., Chabris goes up stage a few steps towards R. C.).

My sisters, my brothers, give not way to despair. Faith and courage! Faith and courage a little while longer. If but one of our comrades escape—but *one*—he can return in three days with the army of Judea!

CHABRIS (comes to R. of Golthoniel.)

Remember the horsemen! The horsemen of Holofernes! How can one soldier escape their long spears? Remember the horsemen! (Instantly Carmi cries out.)

CARMI (on tower).

A cloud! (The whole stage look in the southerly direction indicated by Carmi.)

PRIEST (up stage L. C.).

A miracle!

AZARIAS (L. C. to Rafas).

A mirage. (He and Rafas hurry up steps L. of doors C. and look towards south.)

GOLTHONIEL.

A cloud?

CARMI.

Rising behind the southern mountain!

PRIEST.

We are saved! The God of Israel hath heard us! (The crowd manifests great joy. Claspings each others hands and pointing towards cloud.)

AZARIAS (on top of L. steps).

Wouldst thou look Golthoniel? Thine eyes are better than ours! (He returns with Rafas L. C.)

VOICES.

Yea! Yea! Look Golthoniel! (Golthoniel goes up L. steps in absolute silence, goes to far side of battlements L. of tower, and looks towards cloud. Then he turns and comes sorrowfully to top of L. steps.)

PRIEST (anxiously).

'Tis a rainstorm?

VOICES (from crowd).

Yea! Quick! Tell us! Speak Golthoniel!

GOLTHONIEL (top of steps L.).

My sisters—my brothers—'tis no cloud. 'Tis the dust raised by the ten thousand horsemen of Holofernes galloping across the plain. (The crowd fall on their knees, wring their hands and moan in despair.)

CROWD (moaning.)

Oh-h-h! (Ada at L. C. rises and weeping over her child goes to L. of tomb and prays.)

CHABRIS.

Again, proof of my words vouchsafed in awful form. 'Tis the truth clear and terrible,—not *one* of our brethren can escape to lead our main army hither. And that army, knowing not that we die of thirst, and believing us safe for many days, will not hasten to our relief. (Golthoniel descends steps and comes L. of Chabris at C.)

VOICES.

Nay! Nay! They will come not! We are doomed? Oh-h-h!

CHABRIS (fiercely).

Open the gates to Holofernes! (The crowd as one spring to their feet in excitement.)

GOLTHONIEL (in outburst).

Silence! or the swords of the watch shall silence thee! (The crowd is on the impulse to rush towards Golthoniel when mourner enters L. 3 with four bearing body. Instantly priest and Levites mount L. steps and remain on top of battlements. The priest praying. The funeral stops back of tomb. Mourner kneels. The crowd, out of respect for the dead, fall back to R. so that audience view of mourner is unobstructed.)

CHABRIS.

Silence me! Kill me! (He bares his breast.) How will that help thee? 'Tis the dead who will cry loudest in Bethulia! Every moment new tombs will open. Silence me! Kill me! Put me on this stretcher with this body!

GOLTHONIEL.

Coward! Wouldst thou rush upon thy death while the brave and noble have the patience to suffer and to hope.

CHABRIS.

For what may we hope? Rescue there is none. In a few more hours the people will go mad with thirst, and become a raging mob, drinking the blood of infants, and eating the

flesh of their own sons and daughters. To deliver up the city, to throw ourselves on the mercy of the Assyrians, *that* is our only hope! (He goes up stage a few steps. The mourner rises. The funeral passes out R. 3.)

CROWD (advancing from R to R. C.).

Yea! Yea! Yea!

GOLTHONIEL (steps towards them; they halt).

Men of Bethulia, would ye deliver your wives and daughters to the embraces of the Assyrians?

ADA (comes through crowd to Golthoniel).

Better that than have our babes perish in our arms. See, my child is dead.

THE WOMEN.

Surrender! Surrender!

CHABRIS (coming to R. of Golthoniel).

The women agree—let it be, Golthóniel. (Ada falls back close to crowd.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Women of Bethulia, let me first consult Judith, the Prophetess.

CHABRIS.

He loveth her!

GOLTHONIEL.

Is not Judith the most virtuous woman amongst ye?

VOICES.

Yea! Yea! Yea!

GOLTHONIEL.

Does she not grieve deeply for her dead husband Manasseh?

VOICES.

Yea! Yea! Yea!

GOLTHONIEL.

Doth she not spend her nights in religious services?—her days in fasting and long prayer?

VOICES.

Yea! Yea! She doth! Yea!

GOLTHONIEL.

Hath she not even interpreted the sacred books, moving wise men to wonder?

VOICES.

Yea! she hath! verily! yea!

GOLTHONIEL.

Have not the wise themselves named her a prophetess?

VOICES.

Aye! a prophetess! a prophetess!

GOLTHONIEL.

Let us send for her; she may give us wise counsel.

CHABRIS.

Golthoniël, in all Bethulia there is none who hath an ill word for Judith. I speak no ill word when I ask what can she do? Can she veil the sun? Can she strike the one hundred thousand Assyrians blind? Can she cause water to spring from these dead streets and ashes?

VOICES.

Nay! Nay! Nay!

CHABRIS.

Thou dost fool us, Golthoniël; Judith can do nothing. (Chabris takes three steps towards crowd.) He loveth her; he sacrificeth ye because he feareth that Holofernes will look upon her and desire her. (Golthoniël, struck to the quick, moves up stage C., close to L. steps.)

JUDITH.

VOICES.

Yea! sacrificeth us! sacrificeth us!

CHABRIS.

Open the gates to Holofernes! Surrender!

VOICES (some of crowd begin to move towards Golthoniel.

Others obstruct these. There is jostling among crowd).

Surrender! Surrender the city! Surrender!

GOLTHONIEL.

I'll never surrender.

CHABRIS.

Stone him! stone him! (Azarias and Rafas draw their swords and run to L. of Golthoniel.)

GOLTHONIEL (in outburst to Azarias and Rafas).

Sheathe your swords! I'll fight men! not cowards! (The crowd halts; draws back.)

CHABRIS.

Stone him! On! On!

UNIVERSAL SHOUTS.

Stone him! Stone him! Stone him! (The crowd press forward. Azarias and Rafas beg Golthoniel to draw. The priest hurries down L. steps; hurries between mob and Golthoniel. The mob fling him aside, up stage. More people rush on picking up stones. The noise and excitement work up to tremendous pitch, amid deafening shouts of "Stone him.")

(Judith enters swiftly L. top of battlements. She runs to top of L. steps, overlooking Golthoniel. The crowd seeing her, draw back amazed.

There is perfect and impressive silence.

Judith is pale, worn, gentle, showing clearly signs of age,—so clearly that audience is instantly impressed by it. She is dressed in black, with white hood head-dress falling upon her shoulders. She wears no jewels.)

JUDITH (in gentle voice).

Heaven hath spoken to me in a dream.

CHABRIS (appalled).

A dream!

PRIEST.

From Heaven! (There is dead silence; then all stones fall as one from the crowd's hands.)

JUDITH (in gentle voice).

The Lord hath disclosed to me a spring. (She points to Heaven. Instantly, with one great sob of joy, all stage except Judith kneel. There is silence.)

CHABRIS.

Prophetess, we will return thanks to thee.

JUDITH (still pointing upward).

Nay, to the God of Israel! (The stage remains kneeling. Judith descends L. steps. The priest comes to R. of her. She kneels at foot of steps.)

PRIEST (invoking blessing).

Judith! thou art thrice blessed! (Pause for momentary picture. She rises.)

CHABRIS.

Prophetess, where is the water? (Golthoniel rises and steps to L. of Judith.)

VOICES.

Yea! the spring! the water! the spring! Tell us!

GOLTHONIEL.

Prophetess, may I ask thee to tell only myself and my captains. If thou tellest the people, they will rush to the place and waste more water than they use. (There is an angry snarl from crowd. Numbers rise.)

PRIEST (R. of Judith).

Golthoniel is right.

CHABRIS.

Yea, let us preserve order. The people can go, wait in the cool of their houses—speedily water will be served to them.

JUDITH (comes down C. crowd falls back R.).

Golthoniel, my sisters, my brothers, rejoice with me. Wise as such measures are, there is no need for them.

PRIEST.

Thanks to Heaven!

JUDITH.

The spring I dreamt of burst through the lower soil as I came to it, and flowed so plenteously that my men-servants turned its current and filled seven or eight large wells. The nearest is but three hundred paces yonder. (She points to R. 2.) (Many of the crowd rush off R. 1, R. 2, R. 3. The rest run to Judith, kiss her hem, and then go out R. Ada is the only one of crowd left; she is kneeling at tomb. Priest retires L.)

ADA (rises and comes to R. of Judith).

Oh, Prophetess! The good news was too late for my child! (She sobs.)

JUDITH (takes child and looks upward).

Rest! Rest! thou little one! Unhappy mother weep not! Thy child is in Heaven! Go thou home and weep not!

ADA (takes child).

The mothers and babes of Bethulia bless thee. (Bending over child, she goes out R. 2.)

PRIEST (up stage L.).

I will go, look towards the temple, and offer thanksgiving. (He goes out L. 3, followed by Levites. They are followed by Chabris.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Azarias, Rafas,—take a thousand men—fill every cistern. (Azarias and Rafas bow “Yea” and hurry off L. 3, signalling Reuben, Carmi, Jael and the rest of the watch to follow. The soldiers all exeunt top of battlements.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Though Heaven hath discovered the spring to thee, Prophetess, it behooveth us to take relief to the full, and quickly. For we must hold the city many days. The five thousand have fallen to the last man.

JUDITH (with tears in her voice).

I saw them pass—the brave young men—going forth to battle with the foe. And as they marched out of the gates—Oh-h-h! (She sobs quietly.) So many brave young lives to be sacrificed!

GOLTHONIEL.

The soldier regardeth it not so ; he feeleth great joy.

JUDITH.

Yea—but those who are left behind. The wives, the mothers, the sisters. Since yesterday I have been haunted by one face, the white face of thy mother, when thy brother came, dressed in his armour, to receive her blessing.

GOLTHONIEL (turns aside towards L., with bowed head).

I held her in my arms ; I can feel her heart fluttering now, her tears falling on my hands. (She bows her head; then looking up sees Golthoniel standing with bowed head. She comes to him and asks most tenderly.) Golthoniel, dost thou too shed tears?

GOLTHONIEL (with tears in his voice).

My brother ! The love between us was as the love between Jonathan and David. (He breaks down; then, fiercely flashing, he draws sword, holds it perpendicular, looks upward.)

God of Israel, hear me! Place me man to man, sword to sword, with Holofernes! (He sheathes sword.) (Six knocks are heard without doors C. Golthoniel goes up stage.)

JUDITH (quietly to Golthoniel).

Who knocketh?

GOLTHONIEL.

A soldier is dead within; may be his own have come for the body. (He opens doors C., Judith watching.) (Enter C., four bearing body, followed by weeping wife. They silently go out R. 3, Golthoniel uncovering head.)

JUDITH (C.).

How died he?

GOLTHONIEL (near doors C., with head still uncovered; he pauses at her inquiry, then says, very sadly and quietly):

From—sunstroke! (He goes out sadly C.) (Doors C. close.)

JUDITH (quails at his words).

Oh—h—h! So did Manasseh die! He stood among the reapers, and the sun struck him; and he fell forward upon his face. (With broken voice.) Manasseh! Manasseh! my heart will never heal! (She sobs silently some moments.) When I heard that Manasseh was dead, a shadow fell upon the earth—and that shadow hath remained. (She speaks in a mystic, half-frightened way, mentally seeing the body.) When I saw him dead—my man,—my big brave man! (She breaks down.) Why wert thou taken from me?—thou wert all to me—to me,—a childless woman. (Pause.) Alone, I have mourned for thee. (She sobs quietly, then steps three paces forward and speaks with quiet force.) Alone! *NO!* For in my loneliness I have lived in that Presence (dropping voice gradually with religious fervour) whose name is uttered in the temple (with awe) in the Holy of Holies—when the High Priest and the people kneel and say (kneeling, looking upward and speaking with scarcely audible breathing sound) Jehovah! (Doors C.

both open, showing Golthoniel and six pale, excited officers talking. Golthoniel comes from their midst and hurries towards Judith. Doors remain open.)

GOLTHONIEL (coming down C.).

Prophetess, the spring is poisoned! (Doors close; hiding officers).

JUDITH (rising and starting back in amazement).

Ah!—mine ears throb, my heart trembleth!—what sayest thou?

GOLTHONIEL (comes to L. of Judith).

The spring is an underground rill that beginneth in yonder mountain. Its source hath been filled with poison by Holofernes.

JUDITH.

Can the infidel thwart the will of the Lord?

GOLTHONIEL.

Hear me, Prophetess! Mine engineers tell me that this is an old rill that hath been dry for twenty years. And the cutting of the aqueduct hath made it flow again.

JUDITH.

Doubt they my dream was from Heaven?

GOLTHONIEL.

They say thy dream was mere coincidence—that if thou hadst not discovered the spring, others would.

JUDITH.

Tell thine engineers, Golthoniel, that mine were the feet that were led to the spring; that mine were the eyes to first see the water gush from the earth; that mine were the lips to direct my men-servants to turn its current.

GOLTHONIEL.

Understand me, Prophetess. I believe thy dream was from Heaven, for if there had been delay, there would now be no *pure water* in the wells.

JUDITH.

Ah! So clear then it is to thy mind?

GOLTHONIEL.

For ever! But three soldiers who drank of the spring fell dead!

JUDITH (in horror).

Oh!

GOLTHONIEL.

The whisper ran through the ranks—reached me here—that thou art a traitress!

JUDITH (aghast),

I!—I who love my country better than do the bravest upon the battlements?

GOLTHONIEL.

The whisper dieth among the soldiers!—'tis the *people* whom I fear!

JUDITH (slowly).

They know that I love them. They know that because the joy of the loving child is denied me that I have made every daughter of Israel mine! They know I would gladly give myself in sacrifice to save the innocent little ones!

GOLTHONIEL.

The ungovernable mob, consumed by thirst, is carried by an impulse as straw is carried by a tempest.

JUDITH.

Thou thinkest the people might attack me?

GOLTHONIEL.

Prophetess, the wells hold enough water for five days. By

the sixth day at latest all Bethulia will know the spring is poisoned. When thirst tortures the people what will they not believe? What will they not do? when already the story runneth that thou art in league with Holofernes!

JUDITH (steps forward in great excitement).

Holofernes! Holofernes! For eighty days that name hath brooded over Bethulia like the power of evil! (She stares before her, lost in thought.)

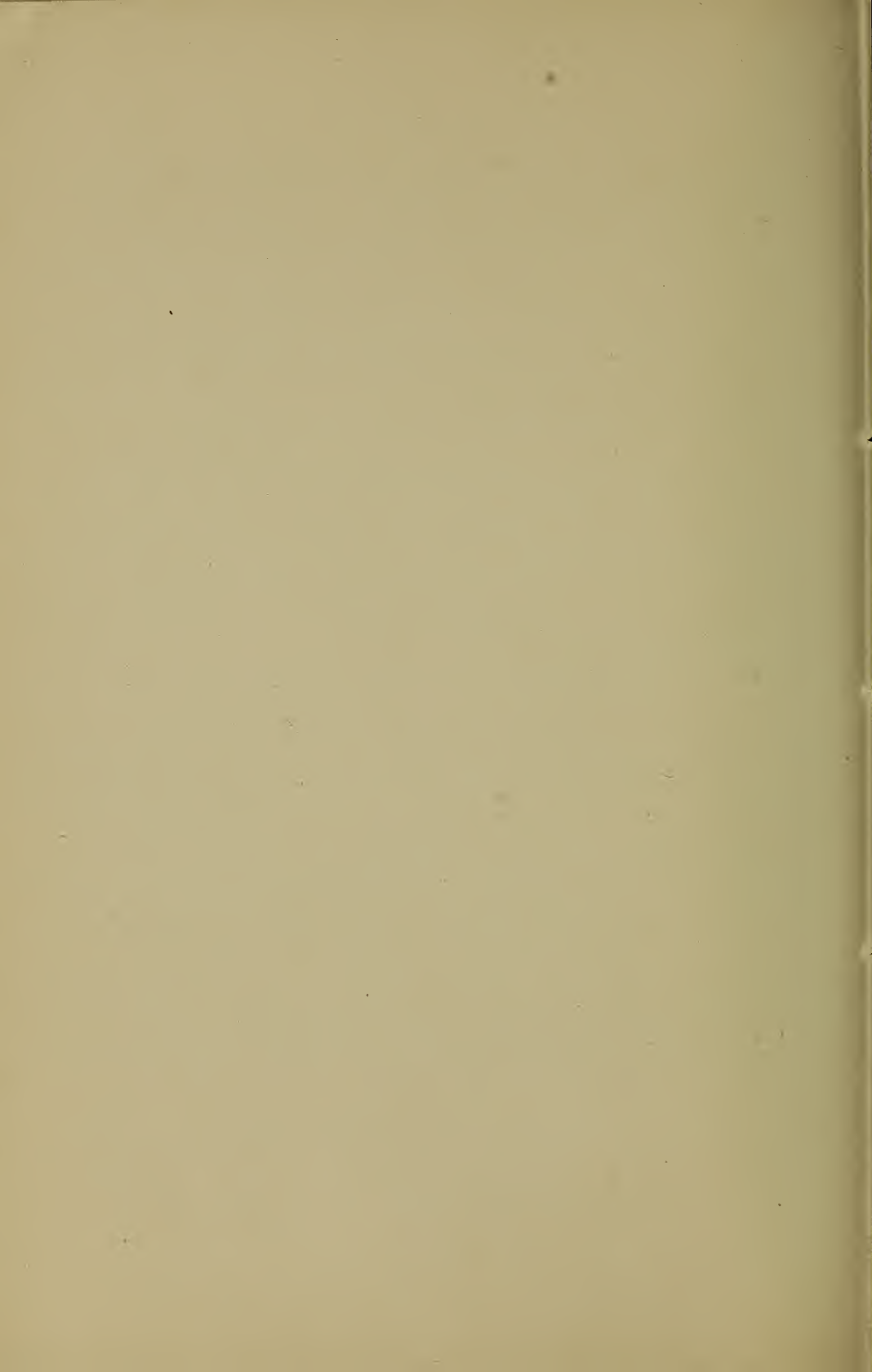
GOLTHONIEL.

Yea, he is the head—the origin—of every act of the Assyrians; without him they are as a body without a mind! (He goes up stage; stops.) On the sixth day I will place strong watch around thy house! My soldiers and my sword guard thee! (Goes to doors C., looks at her; she is lost in thought.) Aye! as I love thee! Although thou knowest it not, and never will. (Exit C.)

JUDITH (at C. looks down, speaks to herself).

Holofernes! (Walks to L. C., looks down, speaks to herself.) Holofernes! the mind of the Assyrians! (Walks to C., looks up in prayer.) Oh God, my God, Thou wilt not forsake me utterly! Out of my great faith my heart crieth to Thee! Show me the way to deliver my country, otherwise the beds of Thy people will be died in blood and the Assyrians will tire of slaughter. Their footmen cover the hills, their horsemen wait in the valleys, their swords and spears stand thick as a harvest around us. (Pause.) Yet is their host nought without Holofernes. (Passionately.) Show now Thy servant how Holofernes may be o'ercome! (She throws her hands up passionately.) Give me, who am a woman, the power to destroy mine enemy! God of Israel, guide Thy daughter!

CURTAIN.



ACT II.

Time.—Evening of fifth day. Sunset; gradually fading into night.

Scene.—A room in Judith's house. The room is large and lofty, with dark grey pillars. The furniture is dark and heavy. A large mirror is at centre of left side, and another at centre of right side. Four steps lead up from back C. of room to a raised recess ten feet wide, going back twelve feet to heavy rich red curtains. These curtains conceal Judith's oratory. At rise of curtain there are sunset reflections through windows at back, R. and L.

Entrances.—Through curtains C and L. 3.

A table stands at R. Beside table on R. is an open box.

Discovered.—Abramie and Dinah, both in low neck dresses and bare arms. Abramie, R. of table, is bending over box, while Dinah, L. of table, standing erect, is placing a necklace around her own neck. Abramie is some eight years older than Dinah.

DINAH.

Look, Abramie! (Abramie takes no heed, but goes on working with her R. hand hidden in box. Dinah speaks pleadingly and louder.) Abramie! (Abramie, as before, takes no notice. Dinah pouts, then suddenly changes to frivolity of manner and runs to L. C., where she surveys herself in mirror on L.)

ABRAMIE (taking a diamond bracelet out of box, speaks sorrowfully).

The last my master gave her. (She turns the bracelet to the light and examines it.)

(Reading inscription on bracelet.) To Judith from Manasseh.

DINAH (turning and seeing Abramie with bracelet).

Oh! (She runs to L. of table.) How lovely! Do let me have it! (She holds out her hand. Abramie, with a severe look, returns bracelet to box, and goes on working with her hand hidden in box. Dinah moves round back of table close to Abramie and pleads.) Do, Abramie! Let me just touch it! Once! only once! for kindness sake!

ABRAMIE (taking out bracelet and speaking in annoyed tone).

There, thou child! (She resumes her work in box.)

DINAH (takes bracelet in both hands and speaks to it).

Let me kiss thee! (Runs to C., she kisses bracelet several times with admiring exclamations.) Oh! Oh! Oh!

ABRAMIE (looking up impatiently).

Quiet! Quiet!

DINAH (runs to Abramie).

Put it on me Abramie—thou knowest the catch. (Dinah holds out bracelet towards Abramie. Abramie stands erect and frowns severely at Dinah, who, cowed by Abramie's look, slowly drops her arm to her side.)

ABRAMIE (severely).

Any moment our mistress may draw back those curtains. (She points to curtains. They both look towards curtains in silence for some moments.)

DINAH (turning to Abramie).

What! Leave her oratory so soon?

ABRAMIE (impatiently).

Tch! Like a sensible child, risk it not. (She turns to box and begins taking out jewels, cleaning them and arranging them on table.)

DINAH (looks at curtains, then raises hand and looks at bracelet, then looks at curtains, then at bracelet. Then comes close to Abramie and speaks reassuringly).

She will tarry awhile to pray.

ABRAMIE (severely).

Have—done! 'Tis wise for thee to leave it here! (She raps table, then resumes work.)

DINAH (draws back from Abramie to L. of table and reluctantly puts bracelet down. Then she looks at it and takes it up. Then she looks fearfully at curtains and puts bracelet down. Then she looks lovingly at it, takes it up and comes close to Abramie.)

She will tarry, I am sure. (Holding out her hand with bracelet.) Just once! let me feel it upon my arm!

ABRAMIE.

Since thou wilt keep worrying! There! (She snaps bracelet on Dinah's arm.)

DINAH (in ecstasy).

Oh-h-h! (She runs to L. C. to see herself in mirror on L. She poses before mirror.)

ABRAMIE (watching Dinah).

Yet men fall in love with such, and will to the twentieth—aye, the hundredth—century. (She turns to box and takes out a beautiful fan. She opens it, dusts it, lays it on table, then bends again over box.) (Dinah, who has turned and watched Abramie's fan business, steals up to table, and unseen by Abramie, takes fan and tip-toes to L. C.)

DINAH (L. C. fans herself, bows, curtsseys, smiles, to her reflection).

A Princess! A Princess! (Abramie has been taking jewels, trinkets, laces, from box. Now she takes a rich girdle, in-

spects it, lays it on table, and bends again over box. Dinah turns at girdle business, waits her time, steals up, takes girdle and runs back, buckling it, to L. C.)

DINAH (L. C. looking at mirror).

A Queen! (Walks with exaggerated stateliness to C., eying over her shoulder her reflection.) A Queen! (Standing C. she does business, first with mirror on R., then with mirror on L.)

ABRAMIE (to herself, as she takes armlets out of box).

Ah!—'twas an evil day when these were put away, and 'tis an evil day when they are brought to light again. Ah! (Sighing, she begins cleaning armlets.)

DINAH (hearing sigh, stops her mirror business).

I have not seen these treasures till now, but thy sigh, Abramie, telleth me they recall sad memories to thee. (Standing C. she eyes herself in mirror R. and L.)

ABRAMIE (without looking at Dinah nor pausing in her work, speaks sadly).

Yea! My mistress hath not opened this box since my master died.

DINAH (having become absorbed in her reflection on a new pose, speaks lightly).

Hath she not?

ABRAMIE (looking at Dinah reprovingly).

Tch!—Come! Come! That fan!

DINAH (comes demurely to table L. and puts fan on it).

Do not censure me Abramie.

ABRAMIE (giving finishing touches to armlets).

Thou art frivolous as a child in the hayfield. (She puts armlets on table, and doing so sees bracelet on Dinah's arm.)

The bracelet! (Dinah drops her arm behind her back! Abramie sees girdle.) The girdle! What dost thou with it?

DINAH (comes to Abramie, L., and kisses her on both cheeks).

Let me keep them for——

ABRAMIE (softened against her wish).

Nay! (Raps table slightly. Dinah moves to kiss Abramie again, but Abramie waves her off.) Kisses will not move me child. 'Tis no time for trifling. (She motions her hand in direction of curtains.)

DINAH (draws back to L. of table and puts the arm with bracelet behind her back).

I know 'tis a dreadful time of war, but if I weep will it make anyone happier?

ABRAMIE.

I did not desire thee to weep.

DINAH (pleadingly).

Say thou art not angered with me. (Abramie with impatient gesture, turns and bends over box! Dinah silently steps to Abramie and kisses her; Abramie stands erect.)

ABRAMIE.

Go! Go! Marry some man and wheedle him with thy kissing and coaxing! Come, let me take that from thee.

DINAH (drawing back to prevent Abramie seizing bracelet).

I do not kiss thee to wheedle thee,—I kiss thee because I love thee.

ABRAMIE.

Keep such patter for thy bridal day.

DINAH.

Now, 'tis thou who art frivolous.

ABRAMIE.

Nay, I bear and forbear, as thy husband will have to do with thee. (She bends over box, lifts up a beautiful shawl, spreads it, then comes towards Dinah.) Take hold! (Dinah takes an end of shawl with L. hand and puts her braceleted arm behind her. Then with quick shuffling steps she backs to C. dragging Abramie with her.)

ABRAMIE (severely).

Quiet! I am not trying to trick thee, nor to play with thee. (Abramie folds shawl while Dinah laughs playfully. Abramie goes L. of table and puts shawl upon it.)

DINAH (comes to L. of Abramie and looks at heap on table which Abramie arranges).

They are all very beautiful! Why doth our mistress get out these jewels after keeping them buried in their casket for three years?

ABRAMIE (without turning).

"Tis a secret!

DINAH (loudly).

Oh!

ABRAMIE (turning to Dinah).

Sh-h-h!

JUDITH (calling from behind curtains).

Abramie!

DINAH (nearly dropping to floor).

Oh-h-h!

ABRAMIE (running towards steps).

My mistress!

DINAH (running after Abramie and calling in terrified whisper).

Abramie! the bracelet! I cannot unfasten it! (Abramie stops near steps and turns to Dinah.)

JUDITH (from behind curtains).

Abramie! (Abramie runs up steps and exits through curtains C.)

DINAH (despairingly).

Oh! (She runs to L. of table and puts necklace hurriedly upon it. Then she struggles to get off girdle.) Oh! Oh! Ill fortune! (She examines catch, then tugs at girdle, half crying with fright.) Oh! Oh! Oh! (She gets girdle off with exclamation of delight.) Ah! (She lays girdle on table happily.) 'Tis done! (She begins on bracelet.) Now! (Tugs in vain and becomes excited.) If I am (struggles) found with this (struggles) when so many poor people (struggles) are dying (struggles) and when all of us (struggles) might die soon (struggles), what sorrow my mistress would feel at my vanity! (Enter Abramie curtains C. She comes slowly, silently, with downcast eyes, towards table.)

DINAH (deliberately examines catch, then works as she speaks).

However—undue—haste—only—hindereth—progress. (Abramie, having been unseen by Dinah, now reaches R. of Dinah. Dinah starts with subdued scream and steps aside.) Oh! thou shouldst have spoken! (Coming to Abramie.) Feel how my heart is beating! (Abramie does not obey Dinah's wish, but stands still, looking sadly upon the jewels. Dinah, impressed by Abramie's demeanour, draws back from her, looks at curtains, then at Abramie, then at bracelet.)

DINAH (coming very solemnly to Abramie with arm outstretched, speaks in hushed tones).

Please unfasten it. (Abramie occupied with her own sad thoughts, mechanically removes bracelet and lays it on table.)

DINAH (drawing aside a few steps to the left).

Oh! what a relief! I shall never wish to feel like a princess again! What would our mistress have said had she discovered me?

ABRAMIE (taking up bracelet).

As this, like the rest, was given her by her husband, she would have desired thee to leave her service. (Puts bracelet on table.)

DINAH (pensively).

And what would I have done then!

ABRAMIE.

As thou dost always when in trouble. Thou wouldst have gone and sobbed till thou didst work upon the feelings of our mistress, and didst get her forgiveness.

DINAH.

'Twould break my heart to part from her.

ABRAMIE (very sadly).

Ah-h-h! (She turns to jewels and arranges them.)

DINAH (awed).

'Tis *she* who hath saddened thee! (She looks at curtains.)
Doth she pray? (She remains watching curtains.)

ABRAMIE (looking at Dinah).

Shall I tell her? (She hesitates.)

DINAH (turning and coming to L. of Abramie with a question in her voice and manner).

Abramie! (The sunset glow, then the twilight, has faded by degrees.)

ABRAMIE (suddenly resolved).

The night cometh; 'tis time for thee to light the lamps.

DINAH (subdued).

Yea! (She goes towards L. 3.)

ABRAMIE (looking after Dinah).

Why should that child ask me—doth my mistress pray? (Dinah goes out L. 3.) What doth the child know? Shall I take her into confidence? Nay! Nay! (Abramie goes to box R. of table and again begins work. Simultaneously Dinah enters L. 3 with lighted taper, lights lamps, finally lights lamp on table, blows out taper, and standing L. of table watches Abramie.)

DINAH.

Why doth our mistress require these treasures? 'Tis the hour of prayer. For a maid to regard them now is wickedness; for a mistress——

ABRAMIE (looks up, hesitates, then speaks quickly).

That is not for a maid to say.

DINAH.

Thou art not cross with me?

ABRAMIE.

Nay! Nay! (She turns to box.)

DINAH.

Thou art troubled.

ABRAMIE (stand erect).

Sorely.

DINAH.

Thou didst promise to tell me the secret of all this.

ABRAMIE.

I did not.

DINAH.

Forgive me, thou didst.

ABRAMIE.

I said there is a secret, and so there is in sureness. But I know it not. I cannot understand our mistress. There! Go! Question me no more. (Dinah standing at L. of table looks at Abramie who resumes work in box.)

DINAH.

Abramie!

ABRAMIE (absently).

Yea!

DINAH.

This forenoon I saw our mistress before the mirror.

ABRAMIE (stops suddenly, looks up, recollects herself, and speaks with affected disregard).

Well? (She resumes work.)

DINAH.

A long time! an *hour*! (Abramie stops her work and looks at Dinah.) She studied herself closely.

ABRAMIE (with involuntary start).

Ah!

DINAH.

Is it *that* which troubleth thee?

ABRAMIE (looks towards curtains, then comes to R. of Dinah).

Dinah! (They walk together towards C.). Something extraordinary hath come upon our mistress. Hast thou noticed aught else?

DINAH (at C.).

Last evening thou and I saw—she did partake of many luxuries.

ABRAMIE.

Instead of her usual simple meal. 'Tis very strange!

DINAH.

Thou must have seen more than I, because thou art her trusted maid, and dost wait on her, and dost dress her. (Abramie starts.)

AMRAMIE (controlling herself).

She hath not been herself since she had that vision.

DINAH (coming close to Abramie and speaking with awe).

I remember my mother saying that through a vision a woman hath become haunted—nay, hath even changed from the human to the fiend.

ABRAMIE (looks at curtains then at Dinah, and speaks in whisper).

Hush! thy words are a sin against our mistress!

DINAH (in awed whisper).

Hast thou seen her eyes?—the blaze in them?

ABRAMIE (in consternation: whisper).

Oh!—thou, *too!*—hast seen—— (Curtains go back with noise of rings. Judith appears. Curtains fall to behind her. Judith is richly appareled. Color is in her cheeks. She looks fifteen years younger than she did in first Act. She pauses momentarily.)

ABRAMIE and DINAH (starting at noise of rings).

Oh! (Abramie steps right, close to L. of table. Dinah steps L. Both overcome with awe and admiration.)

Momentary picture.

JUDITH (coming to top of steps).

Thou mayest go, Dinah.

DINAH (bowing).

My mistress! (She goes out L. 3. Judith descends steps and comes down stage to C.)

ABRAMIE (as Judith advances; looks down and speaks in fearful whisper).

I am again alone with her!

JUDITH (at C.).

Abramie, why dost thou fix thine eyes upon the ground?

ABRAMIE.

I did pray for thee. (Turning hurriedly towards table.) I am forgetting my work.

JUDITH (C.).

Stop! canst thou tell me why have I put off the garb of my widowhood and put on the garments of gladness? why hath the blood come back to my cheeks? the brightness to mine eyes? the spring to my step? (She comes R. C.) Why do I desire these treasures? why do I drink the wine? why do I sit with my harp in the morning sunshine?

ABRAMIE (with show of assurance to hide her real fear).

After years of grieving time taketh the shadows from the brow, and the wishes of youth again incite us women! (She looks timidly to the right.)

JUDITH (with perplexed face).

Do I comprehend thee aright?

ABRAMIE (braving it out).

My mistress, a woman altereth as thou dost under the impulse of a new love. (Judith is taken aback; Abramie looks away R. with fear.)

JUDITH (under her breath).

Love! (louder) at this time! (Still louder.) Aye, at any time. (She pauses and looks towards Abramie.) At the very thought of a new love my mind revolteth!

ABRAMIE (aside, looking R.).

I know 'tis not love, but I'll persuade her I believe 'tis such. (She comes towards Judith.) Love ruleth everyone; love laugheth at death and sieges; love is a fury, consuming with hot breath all whom it toucheth.

JUDITH (with haughty contempt).

Passion! a slave's passion!

ABRAMIE (stubbornly).

Love is nine parts passion, my mistress!

JUDITH (pityingly).

Where didst thou learn such character of love?

ABRAMIE (ashamed, in quiet voice).

My first and only knowledge was gained as I have told thee.

JUDITH (excited).

Among the Assyrians!

ABRAMIE (becoming sad, quiet and earnest).

As thou rememberest, I was captured as a young maiden and kept three years their prisoner.

JUDITH (comes to Abramie and puts her hand pityingly on her arm and speaks in gentle voice).

When thou wast innocent and wouldst have turned to higher love, as the flower that bloometh turneth itself to Heaven.

ABRAMIE (sorrowfully).

When I reflect that I can never love as thou hast loved, my heart groaneth like a fallow deer caught in a snare. (Judith's face changes in an instant from gentleness to frenzy.)

JUDITH (with fierce gesture).

Oh!

ABRAMIE (terror-stricken by the alteration in Judith's manner).

My mistress, my mistress, calm thyself.

JUDITH.

Nay! Let my blood rage against these Assyrians!

ABRAMIE.

Let us not speak of them, it only arouseth thy hatred.

JUDITH (to herself).

Is it hate reneweth the woman in me—thrilleth me with life and youth? (To Abramie.) Tell me again thy terrible experience.

ABRAMIE (fearfully).

Nay, I beseech——

JUDITH.

Repeat it, I pray thee.

ABRAMIE (very quietly, with tears in her voice).

I was dragged by my tresses, thrown into the embraces of the Assyrian chiefs, degraded in the vices of their harems, debauched in their horrible revels. (She looks down, sobbing and wringing her hands.)

JUDITH (with outburst).

VENGEANCE! VENGEANCE! OH GOD! upon the INFIDEL!

ABRAMIE (runs to R. of Judith, takes her R. hand, in terror).

My mistress! my mistress! calm thyself! I beg thee! calm thyself!

JUDITH (comes back to herself).

Oh Abramie! (Looks at Abramie.) How pale thou art! What dreadful recollection harroweth thee? (Abramie turns her head away fearfully.)

JUDITH (kindly).

Wouldst hide something from me? (Takes Abramie's left hand.) From *me*, Abramie?

ABRAMIE (with tears).

My mistress!

JUDITH (folding her other hand over Abramie's).

Tell me thy heart.

ABRAMIE.

I will, as I love thee. (Hesitates, then gets words out.) 'Tis beyond me to account for this change in thee.

JUDITH (dropping Abramie's hand in surprise).

But thou saidst 'twas brought about by love! Oh! thou tremblest! Didst say *that*, to hide thy real thought?

ABRAMIE (drawing away).

I dare not tell it thee.

JUDITH (with alarm).

Abramie!

ABRAMIE (with despair).

Question me not!

JUDITH.

Yea, but I will. (She comes to R. of Abramie, takes her by the hand, brings her to back of table, and turns up the lamp.) Look into mine eyes!

ABRAMIE (looks at Judith).

Mercy!

JUDITH (severely).

If thou fearest me, thou hast done me a wrong!

ABRAMIE.

Nay! Nay! (She turns her head L.)

JUDITH.

Look with thine eyes into mine! (Abramie gazes.) Why fearest thou me? the truth!

ABRAMIE (falls upon her knees sobbing).

If I tell thee—thou—wilt not—kill—me? (She hides her face sobbing in her hands.)

JUDITH (in great alarm).

What hast thou done? (Perplexed she walks up stage to C., then raising her eyes is suddenly confronted by her reflection in mirror on L.) (In tone of revelation.) This beauty! (Runs to Abramie, seizes her by left wrist and twists her upright upon her knees.) 'Tis thou! thou hast done this! the dark arts thou learnt amongst the Assyrians! Hast given me drugs to beautify my body—drugged me, so when the city be taken, my life shall be spared by the infidels who behold me! Thou! Thou! in thy mistaken zeal, hast made me as corrupt as I am beautiful! Answer! Answer!

ABRAMIE (passionately).

Nay! Nay! (Struggling.) Let me up my mistress! (Judith frees her; she rises.) I love thee so, that rather than have thee fall among the Assyrians I would give thee drugs to end thee.

JUDITH.

In sacred truth, then, why dost thou fear me?

ABRAMIE.

I will tell thee. This morning as I dressed thee,—(overcome with fear she turns away.) Oh! Oh!

JUDITH.

Yea! Yea!

ABRAMIE (with head still averted and trembling all over).

And last night in thy sleep, rage shook thee. Thou uttered dreadful cries! didst strike thy forehead; didst threaten; didst tear thyself!

JUDITH (her face rigidly desperate; seizes Abramie's left wrist).

The truth!—the full truth!

ABRAMIE (gradually sinking upon knees while Judith holds her wrist).

Mercy! Mercy! Oh my mistress!—some great power, good or evil—I know not which—seemeth to affect—to rule—thy mind!

JUDITH (releases Abramie—draws back in horror and chokes out her words).

I—understand—thee!—thou thinkest—I—am—possessed?— (Abramie in assent, bows her head almost to ground and gives way to a passion of sobbing.) (Dinah enters L. 3 and impressed by the scene before her, comes timidly to C. up stage.)

DINAH (timidly).

My mistress, Golthoniel waiteth in the outer hall and would speak to thee!

JUDITH (collecting herself at Dinah's voice, but not turning to Dinah).

Ask him to come hither. (Dinah bows.) Abramie, (Abramie raises her face and turns,) go thou with Dinah! (Abramie bows, and goes to R. of Dinah.) Judith comes to L. of table and takes up jewels, one by one, examining them.)

DINAH (as she and Abramie begin walking to L. 3).

Thou art stricken with terror!

ABRAMIE.

Our mistress!

DINAH.

Yea!

ABRAMIE.

Hath lost her soul!

DINAH (in terrified whisper, looking back at Judith).

Mad! (Exit Dinah L. 3.)

ABRAMIE (at L. 3, looking back at Judith).

Yea, mad! (Exit Abramie L. 3.)

JUDITH.

They whisper!—they watch!—they fear the evil one possesseth me! (She drops necklace; fright comes over her face.) Hath my faith left me? (With horror.) Yea!—in my darkness and confusion of thought I charged Abramie with drugging me. (She breaks down, wrings her hands.) I struggle like one blind or lost in a tempest! (She looks down wringing her hands in despair, then raises her left hand and her despairing face to Heaven, and prays piteously.) Lead me!—let thy light fall upon my path! Guide me! For I am what thou makest me, though thou hidest Thy purpose from me.

MOMENTARY PICTURE (she stands at tension waiting for inspiration; the idea of the mirror comes to her; her eyes and face lighten; she points towards mirror with her left hand; she walks to C., stops in amazement before her reflection in mirror L.).

So flushed my cheeks upon my wedding morn! (With sudden joy at recollection.) My wedding morn! (With love and joy.) Manasseh! I hear thy voice—I stand again beside thee! (Enter Golthoniel L. 3, speaking loudly.)

GOLTHONIEL.

Prophetess! (He stops confounded at her appearance, and dress, and jewels. In quiet astonished voice.) What witchery hath befallen thee!

JUDITH.

No witchery—though why I am as I am I know not. (She goes to L. of table, picks up jewels, one after the other.)

GOLTHONIEL (aside, L. C.).

Alas, that I should find her thus, clothed in joyous apparel, toying with these jewels—and her maids shook with terror. Alas!—the sufferings of our people, capped by the poisoning of the spring, have turned her brain. But I'll not speak of it. Nay! All the more I'll give her my devotion.

JUDITH (collectedly).

Thinkest thou that because I look upon these jewels that I have forsaken mine oratory?

GOLTHONIEL.

Forgive my speech—but—thy dress—too!

JUDITH (going up stage R. C.).

Set not too much by that!

GOLTHONIEL (aside).

She answereth most calmly.

JUDITH (comes C.).

Think not of this (points to jewels on table), not of my dress, nor of my beauty. I am myself—*my self*—my soul can never change.

GOLTHONIEL.

So I believe, although at first I thought thy mind had left thee.

JUDITH (hurt, but gentle tone).

Didst think God no longer holdeth converse with me?

GOLTHONIEL (hesitates, then speaks).

How could I know. But this I know. Five days ago thou wast pale; worn with sorrowing; thou didst command a man's pity, his brotherly regard, his reverence for thy great name—a Prophetess. (Judith stands erect with anxious face. Golthoniel speaks with admiration and wonder.) To-day thou art a woman, young, full, beauteous! (Throwing love into his tone.) Yea! all that youth and beauty give to woman is combined and expressed in thee.

(Trumpet sounds without).

GOLTHONIEL (with great joy and excitement).

Azarias returned from Holofernes! (He comes quickly R. C.)

JUDITH.

Thy challenge?

GOLTHONIEL (with intense martial joy).

Yea! I came to thee to bless me in the combat. (Judith goes up stage a few steps. She and Golthoniel turn their faces towards L. 3.)

(Enter Azarias L. 3.)

JUDITH and GOLTHONIEL.

The answer! (Azarias, seeing Judith, stops, dumbfounded at her appearance; then he comes mechanically down stage L. C.)

AZARIAS.

Holofernes sayeth he is a God! He will fight the God of Israel alone upon the plain, but he will not fight Golthoniel. (He bows his head in despair.)

GOLTHONIEL (walks aside R. bowed with despair).

Oh! (Golthoniel turned R. and Azarias turned L. Both stand with their heads bowed, looking pictures of despair. But Judith draws herself erect, her face and body consumed with rage, while her R. arm very slowly rises from her side to the perpendicular.)

JUDITH (with right forefinger pointing upwards; looks first at Golthoniel then at Azarias).

Upon your knees, ye soldiers of Israel! (Golthoniel and Azarias kneel; Judith stands.) The curse of the God of my fathers be upon Holofernes! Upon him, the barbarian! atheist! mocker! (She lowers her hand, walks to steps, mounts them, and faces audience with both hands clenched.) Will the God of Israel suffer insult, defiance, from this infidel; this monster, who destroyeth God's own children? (Pause.) Golthoniel! Azarias! (They rise.) I seek counsel in mine oratory! (She points with her right hand towards curtains. They bow their heads.)

(Picture).

(Exit Judith through curtains C.).

(Golthoniel turns to R. with head bowed. Azarias looks towards curtains in wonder).

GOLTHONIEL (R. C. without turning to Azarias).

Did Holofernes receive thee in person? (Azarias absorbed in watching curtains does not reply.) (Golthoniel looks towards him.) Azarias! (Azarias stands as before.) (Golthoniel comes to Azarias and puts his hand on his shoulder.)

AZARIAS (L. C. starting).

My Chief!—thy badge. It brought me quickly to the presence of Holofernes, and the one courtesy he showed me was when he returned it by his chief minister, Vagao.

GOLTHONIEL.

Thanks Azarias. (There is a pause: then Azarias begins to withdraw towards L. 3.) Azarias!

AZARIAS (stepping up stage L.).

My Chief.

GOLTHONIEL (stepping C.).

A word with thee. (Azarias comes to R. of Gol. and looks towards jewels on table.) I would like to read thy mind.

AZARIAS.

Freely I will tell it thee—to the best of my powers.

GOLTHONIEL.

Even now thou gazest upon the subject whereon I would speak to thee.

AZARIAS.

These jewels?

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea!

AZARIAS.

Though I came hither from the scene of splendour, I saw nought that impressed me as did these jewels, the dress of Judith, and her beauty.

GOLTHONIEL.

Aye—I saw in thy demeanour the force of the—unexpected.

AZARIAS.

Most unexpected—I wondered greatly.

GOLTHONIEL.

But, with me, thou sawst and heard how strong, how clear, are her reason and her faith.

AZARIAS.

Her reason! Verily! But her faith?—such show of faith—strong as it is, could be assumed—a part that could be played—the falsely true of a great deceiver.

GOLTHONIEL (staggering back).

Deceiver!—Azarias! of all my captains thou art he whom I love and trust, but that word had caused my sword to cleave thee——

AZARIAS.

My Chief, thou didst ask me for my mind—I spoke it,—and honestly.

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea, I know—but through the long years I have loved her, keeping my love secret from her—for in my absolute faith I deem her sacred. But speak thy belief—speak it freely—as I asked thee.

AZARIAS.

With trust I answer trust. But a few years since Judith was a young and beautiful woman. She turned to a life of fasting and long watching. 'Twas premature, unnatural. It made her old before her time. Now, under the throb and excitement of the hour, nature hath violently and suddenly rebelled. So hath Judith come to her second youth, lovelier even than the first.

GOLTHONIEL (moving to L. C.).

Thou didst ever take the material view, Azarias.

AZARIAS (crossing to L. of Golthoniel).

Impartial, my Chief—I do not love her. (Judith enters through curtains reading an open papyrus. She comes to top of steps, then stands still, reading. Golthoniel and Azarias both look at her.

(Picture.)

AZARIAS (turning to Gol. L. C.).

As I live I am right. Judith, the Prophetess, is dead! (Steps back.) Behold, Judith the woman! (Azarias goes up stage L. Judith descends steps and comes towards table. Golthoniel stands L. C. looking before him in wonder.)

AZARIAS (aside up stage L.).

The woman who prepareth herself to welcome the foe within the gates. (Exit Azarias L. 3.)

JUDITH (rolling Papyrus and putting it on table).

The Book of the Children of Israel! (Pause.) Golthoniel! (He looks towards her.) List! (He comes near.) Thou dost remember how Eglon, King of Moab, held Israel in bondage? (Golthoniel bows a silent “yea.” She opens Bible and reads): “And when the Children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud, the Son of Gera.” (She pauses and looks at Golthoniel; he moves and looks at her with a self-conscious light in his eyes. She takes a step towards Golthoniel.) “And Ehud made him a sword and gird it under his raiment, and came unto Eglon (Pause) “and obtained audience of him alone!” (Golthoniel draws back, looking with amazement at the badge in his right hand; Judith declaims.) “And Ehud struck his sword into Eglon’s breast, and Eglon fell dead upon the earth.” (Golthoniel is confounded; Judith rolls Bible and steps half way to him.) Thus by the act of one man were the Moabites driven from our land.

(Comes close to R. of Golthoniel.) *One—man!* The Book hath spoken and thine ears have heard! Seize the sword of the deliverer!—Glory awaiteth thee! (He recoils, bewildered; Judith declaims with tone of scorn.) Dost hesitate? perplex thyself?

GOLTHONIEL (firmly, but with bewilderment.)

Verily! thou art no more the Prophetess! thou *art Judith*, the *woman!*—

JUDITH.

Neither speaketh to thee! (Holding out Bible) 'tis the word of the Sacred Scriptures!

GOLTHONIEL.

Yea, and nay! These are not the times of Ehud! To do this I must enter his camp on the sanction of friendly parley; and I then, as a coward, must strike him defenceless, and as a liar, break my faith. (Walking aside three steps L.) Nay, the sword of a soldier is the sword of honor. (Judith walks to table, puts Bible upon it, and returns to R. of Golthoniel.)

JUDITH (at C.).

Honor? when Holofernes refuseth fair challenge, soldier to soldier! Honor? while the unbeliever blasphemeth the God of thy Fathers!

GOLTHONIEL.

Thy mind reasoneth strongly.

JUDITH.

Honor? while Holofernes destroyeth mothers and babes?

GOLTHONIEL.

Thine arguments would be invincible but for my training as a soldier.

JUDITH.

Thy prejudice! to abide by codes of honor, while the infidels force thy sisters into the tents!—while maidens and little children bear the torture of Assyrian crimes!

GOLTHONIEL (walking a few steps towards L. and speaking in a confused way).

I—I—scruple.

JUDITH.

Holofernes scrupleth not—he poisoneth !

GOLTHONIEL (turning towards her with hope in his eyes).

Against all laws of war.

JUDITH.

Then (she motions her right hand and points in the direction of the Assyrians) enter his camp and strike him dead! (Momentary picture. Judith pointing.) Slay this prince of treachery, and all honor shall crown thy heroism !

GOLTHONIEL.

Thy words be my law, for now the riddle of thy beauty is revealed and made manifest. 'Tis for this thou hast changed from Prophetess to woman. 'Tis for thee I go ! (She looks at him in consternation.) (Golthoniel comes close to her and speaks with intense emotion.) Judith, I loved thee while the sacred bonds of thy marriage imposed silence upon me. I loved thee when, as a Prophetess, thou didst consecrate thyself to God. But now my tongue is free to speak my heart to thee. Promise me thy love. (He goes on one knee.) Promise that if I slay Holofernes, and return to Bethulia, thou wilt become my wife!

JUDITH (awe-struck, moving towards R.).

Thy—wife!

GOLTHONIEL (rises).

Give me thy love and my sword shall stop at nothing. Nor treachery, nor trick, nor lie shall halt for me. Let posterity brand me infamous, the deed I commit for thee, my sword shall rejoice in it, and my heart and faith deem it eternal honor. (He comes to her and takes her left hand.)

Promise!—give me thy love, and so surely as thou dost, I swear to thee I can, and will, slay Holofernes! (Releasing her.) I have sworn it!

JUDITH (in awe).

Oh! (She moves from him to the right, trembling.) (She stops, looks towards Bible on table, hurries to it, places both her hands upon it, bows her head upon it. She rises, looks upon Bible, then turns, falls upon her knees, holds her hands in supplication towards Golthoniel.) I cannot dishonor my soul! I can love none but Manasseh!

GOLTHONIEL (turning aside L., bowed with despair).

Oh! Oh! (He makes several ineffectual efforts to come towards Judith, who remains upon her knees, looking on the ground before her, with her hands clasped. Finally he masters himself and comes to her.) Forget! Forget I spoke love to thee, for the woman in thee is nobler even than the Prophetess. (He takes her left hand, raises her, then moves a few steps away L.) But I have loved thee, as thou lovest Manasseh. (She looks upon the ground, the tears coming to her eyes.) I see thee now, as I have ever seen thee; beauteous as thou art, thy pure soul is beyond all earthly affection. (Pause.) But I have sworn it, and I go! Judith, purest of women!—the purpose of my sword arm be constant as thy vows! (He draws his sword, points it to Heaven, kisses the hilt, sheathes sword, then he comes to her, and kneels on one knee.)

JUDITH.

Before I bless thee, tell me how art thou sure of slaying Holofernes.

GOLTHONIEL (rises).

Ten years ago, when Holofernes was but a captain among the Assyrians, he led an adventurous band into our country, and had need to seek a parley. He came himself, held conference, and set back alone through the mountains.

But his own people, fearful of our army, had retreated from their posts, and thus, when the evening came, Holofernes, seeking his comrades hither and thither, reached the spot where I—then a scout—stood in the crevice of a rock with my sword beside me. His back was to me. I could have plunged my sword through him—he would never have known whose was the hand! But I spoke.

JUDITH.

Thine honor as a soldier.

GOLTHONIEL.

And for that he gave me this badge, and told me that if ever I wanted a favour to bring this to him and, if 'twere possible, he would grant my request. So now I go to ask this private audience.

JUDITH.

Wilt thou let me see it? (She accepts badge and examines it.) It containeth a letter!

GOLTHONIEL.

Ah!—perhaps he will meet me, and fight in secret!—Read!

JUDITH (reads).

All truce is ended. For any soldier of Israel—even thine honored self—to approach our lines bringeth instant death. Holofernes. (Golthoniel bows his head and walks towards C. There is a long silence.)

JUDITH (heartbrokenly).

Thy courage, thy artifice, thy life, avail naught. (She comes R. of Golthoniel.)

GOLTHONIEL (turning towards Judith).

And I came to thee to bless my combat with him. Our doom is written. To our posts we go; thou to the oratory, I

to the battlements, there to stay till the arms of death enclose us. (He accepts badge and letter from her, then he goes upon his knee.)

JUDITH (raising right hand to Heaven).

The Lord bless thee, Golthoniel, for a nobler heart than thine there is none in all Israel. (There is silence; then he rises and goes slowly to L. 3; she watching him with deepest pity.)

GOLTHONIEL (at L. 3).

Good-night!—Good-night!—Farewell!

JUDITH (with the tears choking her voice).

Good-night!—Good-night!—Farewell! (Golthoniel goes out. Judith puts her face in her hands and weeps almost silently for some time. Then her weeping becomes quite silent. Then she suddenly flings her arms from her with impassioned scream.)

JUDITH (at C.).

Oh!—what daring and terrible thought flasheth across my brain? I shudder! I tremble! and am rapt! Is it I who am to go to Holofernes?—Yea!—I break from the bonds, the fears, the traditions of my woman nature! My soul, up-borne by this sublime thought, this mighty purpose, spreadeth her wings and soareth beyond the vision, aims, and reaches of the world! Though the environed world should not understand me, I know that God understandeth me and that I understand God!—My body hath changed—my beauty returned to me with no feeling of love or vanity. (Pause, then slowly and deliberately.) Would not my beauty enslave Holofernes?—And then—(in whisper) and then—For no man can find the depth of the heart of a woman, nor perceive the thing that she thinketh!—and then—(She pauses, turns, hurries towards L. 3, calling:) Abramie! Abramie!

ABRAMIE (entering L. 3 quickly).

I am coming, my mistress.

JUDITH (seizing Abramie's R. wrist and hurrying Abramie to C.).

When thou wast in captivity didst see Holofernes?

ABRAMIE (in terror).

Ch !

JUDITH.

Didst see him ?

ABRAMIE.

Often.

JUDITH.

And knowest the manner of man he is ?

ABRAMIE.

Well, my mistress.

JUDITH.

Tell me.

ABRAMIE.

He is a man of imposing stature, huge limbs, great breadth of shoulders.

JUDITH.

Ah!—a very strong man!

ABRAMIE.

A king in strength among men; a great figure clad in dark armour.

JUDITH.

Liked by his people ?

ABRAMIE.

He is the fiercest despot. He hath first loved and afterwards slain several of the fairest women in Assyria.

JUDITH.

The brothers of those Assyrian women ?

ABRAMIE.

None dare cross swords with Holofernes. He is their thunderbolt. He hath won such prowess, performed such prodigies, achieved so many victories, that the Assyrians forgive him his great passion.

JUDITH.

To destroy women?

ABRAMIE.

To—*love*—women!

JUDITH.

Ah!—thou art *sure* this passion is Holofernes' defect—his evil genius?

ABRAMIE.

Quite sure. 'Tis known through all Assyria. (Judith steps forward; simultaneously Abramie steps aside towards L. in terror.)

JUDITH (at C.).

So is mine enemy delivered into mine hands! He glorieth in the power of his wrath, in the skill of his horsemen, the might of his footmen, in bow, and spear, and shield, and sling. Charm by the words of my lips the servant with the Prince, the Prince with the servant. Yea, the stateliness, the pride, the power, the wrath of Holofernes, shall bend like a wisp to the will of a woman!

ABRAMIE (approaching Judith).

My mistress!

JUDITH.

'Trust in God!

ABRAMIE.

One word!

JUDITH.

'Tis God who inspireth great resolutions!

ABRAMIE.

Let me speak.

JUDITH.

Nay!—serve me faithfully.

ABRAMIE.

What wouldst thou have me do?

JUDITH.

Thou knowest some of the Chiefs of the Assyrians?

ABRAMIE (trembling).

The nearest outpost of the Assyrians—three miles from the Eastern Gate—is in charge of the Chief who let me return to Bethulia.

JUDITH (comes to Abramie).

This night, this hour, we will hasten through the gate. (Abramie steps back in terror.) Thou wilt conduct me to that Chief, and he will lead us to the tent of Holofernes.

ABRAMIE (wildly, crying the words).

Oh! my mistress! thy reason hath left thee! Let me first tell thy purpose to Golthoniel and the priest.

JUDITH.

Thou knowest not my purpose. Go!—gird thyself in silence. (Abramie retires, but, when near L. 3, turns and comes back.)

ABRAMIE.

Holofernes hath fascinated many women, as the serpent fascinateth the gazelle.

JUDITH (standing statuesque with her left arm outstretched speaks loudly, despotically).

As I command thee! (Abramie goes a few steps towards L. 3, then returns to Judith.)

ABRAMIE.

Hear me, I beg thee! How canst thou go to Holofernes? thou—a woman?

JUDITH (catching the word “woman” as an inspiration).

Yea!—the woman!—(Dropping her voice to gentle tones.) And when I appear before him, he shall see—the woman! The woman with her loving arms, her gentle voice, her milk-sweet breath, her caressing glances, her yielding and responsive nature.

ABRAMIE (aghast).

Heaven protect thee, for as thy reason leaveth thee, thou growest more and more beautiful! (Bursting into tears, she goes out L. 3.)

JUDITH (to audience).

I would be as beautiful as the perfumed bride of Solomon’s song!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

THE SAME NIGHT.

Scene.—Holofernes' tent. Incense burns among pillars of tent.

At R. U. E. the large tent door is wide open, showing moonlit scene, with Bethulia in the distance, and two hills between Bethulia and R. U. E., the one nearer Bethulia being larger than the other. At L. U. E. and close to L. 3, two heavy curtains hide Holofernes' sleeping chamber. At L. C. there is a table with golden wine tankards and sumptuous wine jars. Up stage C. and L. and R. there are several luxurious couches. Golden candlesticks with lighted candles are at intervals over stage. Down stage L. there is a raised Dais, facing R. There is a clear passage from R. U. E. to C., and thence to Dais.

Entrances.—R. U. E. L. U. E. L. 3.

Discovered.—An animated, brilliant and luxurious dancing scene. The centre of stage is occupied by women dancers. Assyrian officers stand or recline up stage, and L. and R. Some are seated with women. Musicians are seated between Dais and L. wing. Soldiers and attendants. All the Assyrians have dark brown complexions and all are elated with wine. After several minutes dancing, some of the dancers sit; others recline in the embraces of the officers. The rest pose in several successive attitudes before the officers. On the final pose, the music ceases with the entrance of Vagao, and the dancers who have been posing, fall back with abandon among officers.

(Enter Vagao laughing R. U. E).

VAGAO (mockingly).

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! The Israelites cried with a loud voice.

ALL (turning towards Vagao).

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

VAGAO (coming down R. C.).

And Heaven sent them a landslip!

ALL.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

VAGAO (R. C.).

Their Captain planned a surprise. Ha! Ha! Ha! But their five thousand marched into the arms of Holofernes!

ALL.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

VAGAO (laughingly, mockingly).

So wine! wine! wine! (An attendant comes to R. of Vagao with wine tankard.) Look towards Bethulia (he points), ye Captains of Assyria, and drink to the shame and downfall of Israel!

CAPTAINS (with boisterous laughter and mocking cries of "Bethulia" accept wine tankards from attendants, throng towards R. U. E., and, looking towards Bethulia, and holding their tankards aloft, shout).

To the shame and downfall or Israel! (They drink; then hand tankards to attendants, and disperse themselves laughing among the women.) Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! (Enter Arzaele R. U. E. attended by four slaves.) Vagao hands tankard to attendant, hastens up stage to meet Arzaele, bends on one knee to her, escorts her to C., takes tankard from attendant.

VAGAO (in altered, earnest and worshipful tone, in marked contrast to his preceding mockery).

Drink, ye Captains of Assyria, to Arzaele, Queen of the Harems! In the tent of Holofernes beauty is religion, and Arzaele reigneth! (Holding tankard high.) Arzaele, our Queen! (Arzaele smiles graciously upon Vagao and officers near. Attendants quickly fill tankards.)

CAPTAINS (with solemn emphasis).

Arzaele, our Queen! (They drink.) (The court breaks into groups, do conversation and laughing, dallying, drinking, etc., forming background to Arzaele and Vagao. Arzaele goes to dais and sits at foot.)

VAGAO (aside, C., as Arzaele goes to dais).

Haughty Arzaele! How I love thee! and how vainly! (He turns his head R., pondering, aside.) Though I am thy trusted friend, I am the most miserable in Assyria! (He sighs.) Ah!

ARZAELE (seated before dais).

Vagao!

VAGAO.

O Queen! (He comes to R. of her.)

ARZAELE.

Thou didst ponder?

VAGAO.

On the magnificent scene! Holofernes arose and spoke thus to their emissary! (He places R. foot forward with extended R. arm and forefinger.) "Send thou thy God against me, and I will fight him upon the plain! Send thy God, if he be real and have valour!"

ARZAELE.

'Tis strange that such a thought should make thee sigh, Vagao! (She rises, come C.)

VAGAO (taken aback).

I thought of our lord Holofernes. Bethulia succumbeth to thirst—therefore, why should he gnaw his lips, fret, chafe, aye, storm?

ARZAELE (draws herself up very proudly).

My lord is wise. He seeketh happiness in the thunder of battle, the charge of battalions!

VAGAO (comes to L. of her).

O Queen! He hath softer, dearer, sweeter, pleasures—thy counsel, thy smiles, thy endearments, thy bountiful store of delights. He loveth thee! (Arzaele shows great pleasure. Drums without play a short rally, trumpets blow.)

SOLDIERS (without, shouting).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes!

ARAZELE (excitedly at C.).

The battle-cry! (To Vagao.) Thou hast heard no order?

VAGAO.

Nay, but he hath appeared in armour. (They move close to dais.)

(Music.)

(The Court, on the shout without, has instantly changed its light merriment to absolute solemnity and faces R. U. E.)

Enter, R. U. E., twelve maidens two deep, in white, with flowing hair, each swinging silver lamp. Behind maidens come twelve big warriors, each with a drawn sword. The maidens range behind dais. The warriors behind maidens.

Enter Holofernes, R. U. E., in full armour, with rolled map in his L. hand. All Court kneel. Holofernes comes C. Music stops).

HOLOFERNES (at C., loud command).

Vagao! (Vagao rises from knees, hurries to L. of Holofernes and kneels.) To-morrow I storm Bethulia!

CAPTAINS (leap to their feet, drawing their swords, holding them aloft with outburst of delight).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes! (Holofernes extends his L. hand towards captains. They, at this signal, hurry out joyously, R. U. E., holding their swords aloft. Zebdulla comes to R. of Holofernes.)

VAGAO.

My lord, I go to issue thy command. (He hurries out R. U. E. with captains.)

ZEBDULLA.

Wilt thou give us the plan of the assault, my lord?

HOLOFERNES.

Range all our forces closer by two miles. (He holds out his arms.) Crush them! (He brings his arms together.)

ZEBDULLA.

And the signal, my lord?

HOLOFERNES.

March all the squadrons but mine own to their posts. That being done, order my squadron to the foot of the second hill-top. (He points.) Then come to me—I will name the signal. (Zebdulla bows and hurries out R. U. E. in silence.)

ARZAELE (comes to L. of Holofernes and kneels; the rest of court still kneeling).

My lord, thy soldiers surround them, none can escape, thirst killeth them; so are they overthrown where they dwell before thy sword cometh against them!

HOLOFERNES (in fury).

Let none dare to counsel my will! To-morrow I destroy them as one man! Their houses shall be drunken with their blood; their streets shall be filled with their dead. (Loud rolling of drums without, and loud blare of trumpets as accompaniment to tremendous cheering of Holofernes' name.)

SOLDIERS (without; tremendous cheers).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes!

HOLOFERNES (holding his R. fist clenched towards Bethulia).

So shall they shout upon thy ruins! (Holofernes walks past Arzaele to dais, seats himself and studies map. Court rises, breaks into talking and excited groups.)

ARZAELE (rises, comes to foot of dais and kneels R. of him; she speaks pleadingly).

My lord, thou hast lived in thy rage for five days! (He looks at her with sullen anger.) With the dawn the joy of battle cometh to thee! (His face relaxes.) Meanwhile let me soothe thee, with love, and wine, and dances.

HOLOFERNES (with reluctant consent).

The dance, while I study my map. (She smiles upon him; it pleases him.) Afterwards a song from thee.

ARZAELE (kissing his R. hand).

My king, I am forgiven. I will sing the song that sounded so sweetly among the flowers on the banks of thy native river. (She rises and motions musicians behind dais. Harps strike loud notes and first row of dancers run into place and sway and pose to subdued music.) Thy courage breaketh the battles, Oh, Holofernes! At thy frown the nations are affrighted! (She again motions musicians; harps again strike, and second row of dancers run into place, and sway and pose to subdued music.) Thy steed neigheth on thrones and sleepeth on alters. (Once

more she motions musicians; and once more harps strike, and third row of dancers run into place and sway and pose to subdued music. Thou givest thine enemies as a prey, their wives and daughters as a spoil. (Arzaele sits at foot of dais and watches Holofernes with love and admiration. Music strikes loudly, boldly. Dance proceeds. Vagao enters L. 3, and comes R. of Arzaele. Holofernes resumes study of map. The dance changes to a light and graceful step to subdued music.)

CAPTAIN (without).

Thou canst not enter.

JUDITH (without).

Pray, Captain, allow me to pass; I must see Holofernes; I bring good news.

HOLOFERNES (leans forward, listens; he holds up R. hand).

Hold! (Dancers and musicians stop, and dancers fall back. Enter Judith R. U. E., followed by Abramie. Holofernes speaks aside, with his face turned L.) Who is this who cometh with the carriage of a queen, and the face and voice of an angel? (Arzaele shows uneasiness. Holofernes puts map aside L. Court throngs to see Judith. A heavy black mantle completely covers her, but her veil is thrown back. She comes to dais and kneels; Abramie also kneels. Judith's white and pink complexion is in marked contrast to the dark brown of the Assyrians.)

HOLOFERNES.

Woman! Who art thou?

JUDITH (on knees).

I am Judith, the chief woman of Bethulia. (General surprise; Arzaele leans forward watching Judith.)

HOLOFERNES.

Yea, and the object of thy visit?

JUDITH.

JUDITH.

To do obeisance to my Lord Holofernes.

HOLOFERNES.

Dost mean thou hast left thine own people?

JUDITH.

For ever, my lord. (Arzaele rises with concern.)

HOLOFERNES.

And now thou wishest to pay allegiance to Assyria?

JUDITH.

Yea, my lord.

HOLOFERNES.

Rise woman. (Judith rises.) Be of good comfort and fear not. For I hurt none who is willing to serve me. But why hast thou left thine own people? (Arzaele leans forward to watch Judith closely, and motions Vagao to watch with her.)

JUDITH.

I am religious, my lord, and day and night I serve my God. (General movement and sensation.)

HOLOFERNES (sternly interrupting her).

Woman, I have challenged thy God! (To attendants at back of stage.) Draw back the tent! (The tent is drawn back from R. U. E. to R. wing, and from R. U. E. to curtains of Holofernes' sleeping chamber, L. U. E., discovering immense fields of tents, and soldiery, and camp fires. All look at picture. Abramie clings in terror to Judith. Judith remains calm.)

HOLOFERNES.

Behold mine army! At *my* hand and sign thy people yonder will be rent piecemeal, and their God, who fighteth for them, is helpless before *me*.

JUDITH.

Because of thy might I have come to serve thee. (Vagao and Arzaele interchange glances. Arzaele leans forward with anger and suspicion.)

HOLOFERNES.

If thou wishest to *serve me*, why avowest thou a false God in my presence?

JUDITH.

I am come to declare words of truth, though my life be the forfeit. (General sensation.)

HOLOFERNES (with anger).

I bade thee be of good comfort and not to fear. And I told thee I hurt none who is willing to serve me. But *here* thou shalt not bring thy religion.

JUDITH (pointing upward)!

I worship the Most High God! (There is general consternation.)

VAGAO (aghast).

She hath asked for sentence of death! (Holofernes signals. Four swordsmen with drawn swords come from L. C. and stand two each side of Judith. Abramie crouches sobbing beside Judith. Judith stands erect, pointing upward.)

VAGAO.

If he signaleth, she dieth!

ARZAELE (looking at Judith; speaks in wonder).

She trembleth not! what courage! (She looks at Holofernes.) He struggleth with himself! She seeth it! 'Tis not courage! 'Tis serpent wisdom! She knoweth she is a beautiful woman?

HOLOFERNES (after a great struggle).

Woman! presume not too far upon thy sex and beauty!

ARZAELE (aside, with gesture of rage and hatred).

Ah!

HOLOFERNES.

In private thou mayest or mayest not worship thy God, but obtrude not His name upon the Assyrians. (He signals to Vagao. Swordsmen fall back among crowd.)

VAGAO (comes to L. of Judith).

That decree meaneth, that any in Assyria is free to take thy life if thou transgress our lord's command. (He retires to R. of Arzaele.)

JUDITH (kneels on one knee and bows to Holofernes).

I promise thee, my lord, that I will not mention my religion to any in Assyria.

HOLOFERNES.

Well! Rise, woman! (To attendant.) Give me wine! (Judith looks down.)

VAGAO (to Arzaele).

A compromise?

ARZAELE.

A victory over his heart! (Holofernes accepts wine and drinks.)

VAGAO.

She seeketh that?

ARZAELE.

Her religion is but a trick to fix his attention upon her.

VAGAO.

Aye! and in no other way could she have so commanded it.

ARZAELE.

Indeed! at first I thought her beautiful, but now I feel she is most subtle.

VAGAO.

But—her object?

ARZAELE.

Watch! he is about to speak!

HOLOFERNES.

Woman, come closer! Why hast thou fled from thine own people!

ARZAELE.

He suspecteth her!

JUDITH.

My lord, when I began to tell thee, I did anger thee. Suffer now thy servant to speak before thee, and no lie shall come out of my mouth.

HOLOFERNES.

Speak, and fear not!

JUDITH.

My people have provoked their God so that their victuals fail them, and they have scarce any water. And they blaspheme their God and are false to him in their hearts, and their God regardeth them not, but resteth a simple observer of the war. And I, who am true to my God, am fled from them. And I came to thee, because thy wisdom and thy powers are reported in all the earth; thou only art excellent in the kingdoms, and mighty in knowledge, and wonderful in feats of war! And because thou hast protected me, and allowed me to worship my God, and to live amongst thy people, I will show thee this night a secret way into Bethulia. And I will set thy throne in the midst thereof; and thou shalt not lose one life in making Bethulia captive. (Universal sensation. Court throngs near Judith observing her with wonder.)

HOLOFERNES.

Woman, for this service I will make thee an honored guest in Assyria. (To Court loudly.) Away! (The Court proceeds to go out R. U. E. Holofernes takes up map and opens it.)

JUDITH.

VAGAO.

This, then, is her object?

ARZAELE.

I know not—her answer hath confounded me.

HOLOFERNES.

Woman!—sit thee and rest!—thou hast delighted me! (He looks at map.)

JUDITH.

My lord, I thank thee! (Vagao takes Judith and Abramie to couch up stage C. Judith reclines: her head on R. of couch. Abramie sits on L., foot on L., foot of couch on ground.)

ARZAELE.

Delighted me! Through his own tongue this stranger striketh me! Watching Judith with hatred she goes towards L 3 and stops.)

HOLOFERNES.

Vagao! have a tent prepared for the woman and her maid! (He resumes study of map.)

VAGAO.

My lord! (He goes out R. U. E.)

ARZAELE (comes to Judith C. of couch).

Jewess, when thou canst, excuse thyself and go to thy tent. Then return hither, I would speak to thee. (Goes to R. of couch and glances at Holofernes, who still studies map.)

JUDITH.

What is thy name and office?

ARZAELE.

Arzaele, the Queen.

JUDITH (rises, bows reverently).

I will come, O Queen! (Arzaele inclines her head, and retires towards R. U. E., looking back with hatred at Judith, who resumes her position on couch, reclining with her back towards Arzaele.) (Enter Vagao R. U. E. He stops R. of Arzaele.)

ARZAELE.

Hush!

VAGAO.

O Queen!

ARZAELE.

Long thou hast loved me, and I have listened not. But if thou wilt stir up hatred against her——

VAGAO.

My beloved Queen, I will bring the chiefs in a body to request Holofernes that after she showeth us the secret way, we will kill her with her own people.

ARZAELE.

A masterpiece of policy! (Vagao comes down stage to Holofernes.) Oh thou, Jewess!—thou and I cannot both live in Assyria! (Exit R. U. E.)

VAGAO (kneels).

My lord, the tent is almost ready—between thy tent and that of the Chief Captain. (He points towards R. U. E.)

HOLOFERNES.

Aye! and have the sides of mine own tent drawn together. (He resumes study of map.) (Vagao goes out R. U. E. Tent falls to, leaving only entrance R. U. E. open as on rise of curtain.)

ABRAMIE (rising in fear at tent side coming together).

Oh!—my mistress!

JUDITH (leaning forward to watch Holofernes, and motioning Abramie down).

Silence! (Abramie sits, looking towards Holofernes.) (Holofernes descends from dais to L. C.)

HOLOFERNES.

Woman! come hither! (He goes C., Judith comes R. of him. Abramie stops at couch: he holds out map: he speaks with suspicion.) Wilt thou show me upon this map whither is the way?

JUDITH (drawing away R., surprised by his sudden and direct request).

My lord, I cannot—but—I—can lead thee.

HOLOFERNES.

This map is a true picture of the country between here and Bethulia; canst thou not mark the way upon it?

JUDITH.

Nay, my lord—'tis not possible! I can lead thee along the way, but I cannot show it thereon.

HOLOFERNES.

An underground way?

JUDITH.

Mostly, my lord!

HOLOFERNES.

Therefore the map will not show it—but thou canst mark here, where the underground way beginneth?

JUDITH.

I understand not maps, my lord. As the wild deer findeth her way over the hills, so would I find the way to my home and lead thee.

HOLOFERNES (he rolls up map, looks at her, then speaks).

'Tis mysterious thou shouldst come to me at the hour of thy people's fate. And if thou hadst an ambush prepared thou wouldst answer as thou hast answered.

JUDITH.

My lord, there is no ambush. None of my people knoweth I have fled hither. (He looks at her incredulously.) Thou believest me not—yet will I show this secret way unto thee, and thou shalt drive Golthoniel and his soldiers as sheep that have no shepherd.

HOLOFERNES.

'Tis a new manoeuvre of war, that a woman, young and beautiful as thou, shouldst conduct her enemy into the citadel of her brethren. (They cross.)

JUDITH.

They are no longer my brethren—they serve not their God.

HOLOFERNES (turning full face to her with astonishment).

I serve not *their* God—wherefore am I better than they, that thou shouldst wish to betray *them* to *me*? (Judith looks down. He steps R. and speaks aside in whisper.) She cannot answer! (Aside, in suppressed voice, looking towards her.) And now that she looketh modestly down, and I behold not the beauty of her countenance, I can reason with me calmly. (Folds his arms and looks R.) Yea, voice of reason, would a woman bare her breasts to the Assyrian swords in order to betray her own? 'Tis monstrous! She hath lied to me! Her people are prepared in ambush, but her beauty hath not persuaded me—nay, it hath warned me to beware of treachery. (He turns to her.) Woman, I asked thee why desirest thou to betray thine own?

JUDITH.

My lord, I told thee that I would bring this thing perfectly to pass by thee—but if thou believest me not—do with me as thou wilt.

JUDITH.

HOLOFERNES.

So thou perceivest thou canst not *deceive* me?

JUDITH.

Thou wilt not condemn me to death, my lord?

HOLOFERNES (turns to her).

'Tis the punishment for the spy and the traitress! But thou art fair—too fair—to be given to the swordsmen. (Walks aside R. and speaks aside.) She—is—very fair!

JUDITH.

Thou wilt let me live, my lord!

HOLOFERNES.

As a captive—*my* captive.

JUDITH.

Nay, nay, my lord!

HOLOFERNES.

I have spoken. (Judith bends low. He points to couch.) Rest thee! (Judith rises and goes up stage to couch C. Drums roll and trumpets blow near. He walks R. C.) The march hath begun! Ah, fate! the plan of to-morrow shall proceed as I ordained it! (Arzaele appears R. U. E., watching. He looks towards Judith and dwells on the words.) And—thou! thou! (with deep sigh.) Oh! (He continues to look upon her.)

(Judith meeting his gaze, drops her veil.)

ARZAELE (at R. U. E. aside).

She droppeth her veil! She knoweth he is enamoured of her! Oh, cursed Jewess. Even if I did not love, I have passions! (Exit R. U. E.)

(Drums and trumpets close at hand arouse Holofernes from the fixedness of his gaze upon Judith. He hastens R. U. E. and stands watching troops.)

ABRAMIE (rising in terror at noise of drums and trumpets).

Let us fly into the wilderness! (Drums again peal.) Hark, the squadrons come! From this hour we shall hear nothing but the tramp of their thousands preparing to storm our city!

JUDITH (seizing Abramie by the wrist and forcing her to sit).

Patience! Patience! Control thy timorous soul!

TROOPS (cheering as they march past).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes! (Holofernes watches the march past Abramie rises up wild with terror; shrieks and faints in the arms of Judith. Judith lays Abramie on couch, fans her, moistens her mouth with wine from a tankard on table, L. C. Continues fanning her. Judith puts her veil up while tending Abramie.)

(Enter Arzaele, R. U. E. She comes down stage, R. C., with Holofernes, R. of him.)

ARZAELE.

My lord, may I speak to thee? This woman hath come to decoy thee and thy chiefs into an ambuscade.

HOLOFERNES.

A woman into jealousy.

ARZAELE.

See, her maid hath fainted—put the maid to the torture.

HOLOFERNES.

And I shall discover that thou art jealous.

ARZAELE.

My lord, the chiefs have discussed the matter, and have all told Vagao they are convinced she is the instrument of the enemy.

HOLOFERNES.

That is impossible—for she is *my* captive! The chiefs have my orders; let them proceed! (Arzaele, crestfallen, goes to R. U. E. in silence, stops with fierce gesture at door and exits. Holofernes goes to Judith; Abramie is now recovering; Judith drops her veil at Holofernes' approach.)

HOLOFERNES.

Judith, thy maid needeth rest and food and wine. My minister, Vagão, waiteth without to conduct thee to thy tent where every luxury awaiteth thee.

JUDITH.

I thank thee, my lord. (She rises.)

HOLOFERNES.

'Tis our custom before battle to hold revel. When all is ready I will send for thee. Come, drink, rejoice.

JUDITH.

I thank thee, my lord.

HOLOFERNES.

And when, at my wish, the guests depart, thou stay!

JUDITH.

I hear, and obey, my lord. (Holofernes escorts her towards R. U. E. Abramie following.)

HOLOFERNES.

Thou hast found great favour with me. (They reach R. U. E. Exit Abramie, R. U. E.)

HOLOFERNES.

Before thou goest I would have thee raise thy veil.

JUDITH (most humbly).

My lord! (She raises her veil and exits R. U. E.)

HOLOFERNES (draws back confused with admiration).

Beautiful jewess! (He comes C.) Thine eyes are the genius of love! Thou art the embodiment of my imaginings, the woman of hope and pleasure, the consummation of my life! At thought of thee love cometh with fourfold strength upon me, and now that I keep thee here my captive, the suspicion, that like a cloud enveloped thee, vanisheth in the glory of thy beauty! (Women's voices are heard singing without, L. U. E. He listens.) Sing, ye fair ones of Assyria! Sing the sweetest of your love songs! Sing, lest the beauty of Judith become a tyranny to gall me! (Walking to curtains, L. U. E.) Sing, for I come to ye seeking forgetfulness of her in the eyes of other women! (Exit through curtains, L. U. E. Singing gradually dies away.)

(Enter Arzaele, R. U. E.)

ARZAELE.

His captive! (She comes C.) *His captive!* How can I turn his love for her into hatred? (She deliberates. Vagao enters R. U. E. and comes R. of her.)

VAGAO.

Since she is not to lead us, 'tis not possible for me to carry out my promise, unless——

ARZAELE.

Some other course. (Vagao bows.) How speak the chiefs now?

VAGAO.

Bitterly. They say that despite her pretence and treachery our lord is still enamoured of her.

ARZAELE.

Then, 'twould still be easy to raise their wrath against her?

VAGAO.

Their hatred is like the smothered coming of a storm. One rash direction would precipitate it.

ARZAELE.

Manage their hatred and keep it working till occasion giveth us the opportunity. (Vagao bows. Exit R. U. E.)

ARZAELE.

Now that the chiefs are arrayed against her, I dare anything to win back my position. Whom could he blame? When any one of the chiefs might secretly kill her? In the midst of their thousand swords her life hangeth by a thread, and shall I fear to strike when all but one will rejoice at her death. (Going to L. 3.) Shall—I—fear? (At L. 3.) Shall—I—fear. (Exit L. 3.)

(Enter Judith and Abramie R. U. E. Abramie R. of Judith; Judith wears heavy black mantle. They come to C.)

JUDITH.

Converse with no one—dost hear? Obey me most strictly in that!

ABRAMIE.

My mistress!

JUDITH (looks round).

Arzaele is not here—we will wait for her. Keep repeating these words over and over in thy memory. Thou art to come with me to the revel, and art to stay with me until the revellers depart. And when Holofernes desireth speech of me alone, thou art to go and wait in my tent, with thy skirts girdled.

ABRAMIE.

My mistress, go not to their revel. They drink blood with their wine; their dances become more and more shameless; they abandon themselves to every hateful and vicious desire. (Arzaele appears through curtains L. U. E. She stops at curtains.) Oh! Arzaele is watching the—hatred curleth her lip—she darteth at thee bloody glances!

ARZAELE (coming half way).

Judith, I wish to speak to thee, with none other present.

JUDITH (bowing).

I wait thy pleasure, O Queen! (To Abramie.) Leave me and stay in my tent until I return to thee. (Exit Abramie R. U. E.)

ARZAELE (aside up stage, L. C.; draws dagger from bosom).

If thou ever dost return! (She hides dagger and comes L. of Judith.) Judith, I come to thee as a friend! (Judith moves away towards R. C., watching her. The two women stand looking at each other. Holofernes appears through curtains, L. U. E., and stands with curtains folding against him left and right.)

HOLOFERNES (aside, looking at Judith).

Other women are earth!—thou goddess!

ARZAELE (comes close to Judith and whispers).

My heart is drawn to thee—I would have thee as my right-hand woman in waiting.

HOLOFERNES (loudly).

Judith! Arzaele! (Both women start. Judith goes R. C. of Arzaele L. C. Holofernes comes down R. of Arzaele.) Whispers are plotters! (He goes up stage near R. U. E., and calls loudly.) Vagao!

VAGAO (entering).

My lord Holofernes! (Holofernes walks to C., Vagao following at distance).

HOLOFERNES.

Show this woman to her tent. Enclose her with a guard. They are to kill her if she leaveth the tent before thou bringest her to the revel. When thou bringest her, disperse the

guard. (Vagao bows obedience, then motions Judith; they both go out R. U. E. Holofernes looking after Judith; he turns to Arzaele; she cowers and comes to him.)

HOLOFERNES.

What meanest thou, bringing this woman to private audience—speak the lie or the truth thou hast made ready!

ARZAELE.

Thou shamest me before that stranger. Thou lookest after her as if she had bewitched thee. (There is silence: Holofernes looks at her with contempt.)

HOLOFERNES.

Thou dost forget thou art my slave. (He looks at her with contempt. She draws away L.)

ARZAELE.

My lord, I did ask her to become my right-hand woman-in-waiting, and a concubine for thee if thou shouldst desire her. (He walks to R. of Arzaele, looks her in the eyes, then sees the dagger in her bosom, plucks it, and holds it forth.)

HOLOFERNES (holding forth dagger).

Thus doth a wife seek a concubine for her husband. (He flings the dagger away L.) Slave! raise but thy finger against her and thou shalt die by the torture.

ARZAELE (falling on her knees).

My lord!—I meant to kill her! This woman is a fanatic in her religion—she dared thee with thy swordsmen beside her—thou didst surrender to her treacherous tongue.

HOLOFERNES.

Thy tongue will bring silence upon thee.

ARZAELE.

Hear me! When I informed thee of the Chief's decision thou didst mock me. 'Twas already the conviction in thy

mind that she had come here to deceive thee—to betray thee to the ambush! Now, thou lovest her! Nay, thou art drawn to her, by the very uncertainty, the very danger, that should cause thee to fling her from thee. My lord, consider it—this fanatic who careth nought for her life—may she not have some other trap for thee?

HOLOFERNES.

Thou hast reigned long as Queen of the Harem—too long, when thou believest a woman can lay a trap for me. (He moves toward C.)

ARZAELE (rises and follows him).

One woman understandeth another, my lord.

HOLOFERNES (turning savagely).

I will make thee *her* slave.

ARZAELE (passionately).

Blind! Blind! my lord! (She tries to cling to him.)

HOLOFERNES (seizing both her wrists).

I will not be defeated and frustrated of my purpose. (He flings her from him L., and walks towards R. C.)

ARZAELE (following him).

She can never love thee as I love thee. I have lived by thy looks, thy words, each moment these three years. And now this woman hath but to speak to thee—her cheeks have but to flush with hotter blood—

HOLOFERNES (with angry cry and gesture).

Oh! (In fury he walks R. C.)

ARZAELE (following him).

Remember the love my heart has for thee. On my knees I beg thee not to love this Hebrew woman! (She falls on her knees.)

(There is a noise without of angry voices ; they both look towards R. U. E. Holofernes walks two or three steps towards R. U. E., listening.)

ARZAELE (rising).

Ah! (Prompted by the noise, she comes to Holofernes.) My lord, the Assyrians have always hated the Judeans; let not this Hebrew woman rule both thee and thy people. (There is a louder noise without of angry voices and jingle of swords; both again listen. Holofernes again steps towards R. U. E.)

ARZAELE (following him).

My lord, if thou wert to love this Hebrew woman, thy people would turn upon thee.

HOLOFERNES (up stage R. C. turning with fierce outburst).

Slave, thou liest! (She falls upon her knees.) The pulse of mine army keepeth unison with mine own! (There is a loud clatter and clash without. Instantly Vagao rushes in R. U. E. and falls trembling to the earth ; Holofernes looks in wonder; Arzaele cowers.)

VAGAO.

My lord, the Chiefs drove me in at point of the sword. They desire audience of thee!

HOLOFERNES (in voice of thunder).

Bid them enter! (He motions Arzaele to leave.) (Exeunt, Vagao and Arzaele R. U. E. Arzaele looking back at Holofernes.)

HOLOFERNES (comes to C.).

Her words are true! Rebellion hath come! The assault pendeth! The blood of my soldiers burneth for action, and the heart of the camp beateth to the invincible will of war! Division is destruction! 'Tis the moment! Yea, and while I live I rule! (Harp is heard without R. U. E.; he starts, listens

and speaks in loving whisper.) Oh-h-h! whose harp? the harp of Judith! (He listens again.) (With intense suppressed passion.) Oh, beautiful Jewess! thy music vibrateth upon every nerve in my body, and maketh Assyria, Yea, the conquest of the world, naught beside thee! (In burst of fierce passion.) Dare they oppose me! Dare a hundred chiefs, each with a drawn sword, stand between thee and me,—I'll cut my way *to* thee! (He draws his sword and faces towards R. U. E. Harp ceases. Enter Vagao and chiefs R. U. E. They come down a few steps, then stop at sight of Holofernes. Holofernes stands C. bursting with rage.)

ZEBDULLA (hurriedly).

Use thy craft to tell him we wish this Hebrew woman to be expelled from the camp.

VAGAO (hurriedly).

Nay, *thou—thou proposed* it.

ZEBDULLA (hurriedly).

I beard Holofernes in full armour, his sword ready, rage consuming him? Not I for the first blow of the lion! Let one more valiant shame me! (The distant roll of drums and noise of trumpets are heard.)

HOLOFERNES (furiously advancing upon Chiefs).

What want ye on the eve of victory?

ZEBDULLA.

That thou shalt lead us.

HOLOFERNES.

Conspiracy is among ye! ye tarried when ye entered, and put your heads together like women.

ZEBDULLA.

Like soldiers of Assyria, thinking this Hebrew woman might influence thee to spare Bethulia. (A short roll of drums is heard in the distance.)

HOLOFERNES (sheathes sword with a clash).

Have I altered my commands? (Drums and trumpets are heard nearer.)

HOLOFERNES (pointing to direction of sounds).

Who ordered the drums to beat, the trumpets to blow, my guards to sharpen their swords?

CAPTAINS.

Thou! thou!

HOLOFERNES.

The attack, five days ago—who led it?

CAPTAINS.

Thou!

HOLOFERNES.

Who doubteth my courage is potent as 'twas then?

CAPTAINS.

None! none!

HOLOFERNES.

Or stand forth him who thinketh this sword is not true to the heart and cause of Assyria!

CAPTAINS.

We are assured.

ZEBDULLA.

So anxious are we, my lord, to storm this citadel, that we feared lest some mischance might at the eleventh hour prevent us.

HOLOFERNES.

So—so—

ZEBDULLA.

Such mischance as this Hebrew woman weakening thee with the beauty of her countenance, and inveigling thee to spare her brethren.

HOLOFERNES.

Zebdulla! My Captains! War is first! Love is last! I look upon this Hebrew woman as ye will look upon any fair captive ye take in Bethulia. (There is suppressed congratulatory laughter and tokens of mutual understanding and pacification among Captains; they move towards R. U. E.)

VAGAO (steps forward).

My lord, the captains have not received thy word, that after the revel Judith is to come and go without stop or question.

HOLOFERNES.

Vagao! My Captains! 'tis good of ye to thus anticipate me. Inform the camp that Judith is one of our own people. Then bring your officers and the dancers. Hold merry festival till the time cometh for me to give the signal and to lead the battle. (Drums roll and trumpets blow without. Squadron marches past. Holofernes walks to curtains L. U. E. The Chiefs go to R. U. E, draw their swords and hold them up.)

CHIEFS and TROOPS (without).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes! (Exit Holofernes through curtains L. U. E. Chiefs sheathe swords and exeunt cheerily R. U. E. Drums and trumpets sound without, then die away in distance. Enter Arzaele R U. E.)

ARZAELE.

He won them to a man. And I—poor fool—waited without to run between his sword and theirs. (Heartbrokenly.) Am I then to be cast away? Yea, 'tis the fate of women to live but a short year in a man's affection. It seemeth but yesternight, he crowned me Queen. (With sudden rage, exclaiming Oh! She draws dagger, hurries towards R. U. E., then suddenly stops.) 'Tis not possible! (She hides dagger.) The guard surroundeth her! and at the revel his eyes will never leave her! and none will plot with me against her. (She comes C.) Fool! Fool! I could have done it when I had her here alone.

Let—me—think—the ambush!—all know that. She came here to deceive him—all know that. *He* knoweth it. (Dwelling on the words.) To—deceive—him. (Quickly, with inspiration.) Therefore, she *hateth* him!—and he loveth her! He, my lord Holofernes, the proud tyrant, who, where he loveth, taketh nought but worship in return. If I can make her show her hatred—aye—and before the Court assembled! 'Tis the place—before the whole Court! If I can there bring ridicule upon him and his passion for her, the swordsmen will hack her breasts, and he will laugh at it! But how to do it? How? How? With the blood of the Hebrew women who were slain at his command this morning! *With their blood!* (She is on the impulse to run out R. U. E., when Holofernes, without armour, enters through curtains, L. U. E., and comes C. She advances a few steps with arms outstretched towards him; he turns his back upon her. She advances a few more steps, then retreats, bursting into tears, while Holofernes walks to dais.)

ARZAELE (reaching R. U. E. the turns with a mad aside.)

The blood of the Hebrew women! (Exit Arzaele.)

(Instantly music strikes. Women enter dancing. Holofernes takes his seat on dais, takes up map, studies it with serious face. Revellers enter with tankards and slaves with wine-jars, R. U. E. Simultaneously chiefs enter L. 3, and stand near dais, between dais and L. C. Vagao enters L. 3, and stands between Chiefs and dais. Court throngs in R. U. E. and L. 3. People drink and laugh among themselves.

PICTURE.—C. down stage. Women dancing and smiling. Foreground, L. Chiefs talking seriously among themselves; and Chiefs and Vagao watching Holofernes, with serious faces. Holofernes, eyes rivetted sternly upon map. Background, L. C., and R. Court laughing, drinking and dallying. (The dance continues a few moments; then dancers fall back laughing among crowd, who hand them tankards. Music stops. Court continues laughing, drinking, business. Chiefs mani-

fest resentment against Zebdulla; he tries to pacify them.)

A CAPTAIN (pointing to Holofernes, and speaking with resentment).

What is before us?

ZEBDULLA (with reluctant admission).

True, he weareth not his armour.

A CAPTAIN.

Therefore, will he tarry with this Judith.

ZEBDULLA.

Let us not accuse him till he giveth cause. See, he studieth the map. I am to wait upon him when the order to march goeth to his own. Then he giveth me final commands. The time draweth nigh. (Enter Arzaele, R. U. E., with tankard in her R. hand. She comes swiftly to dais, and puts tankard down.)

ARZAELE.

My lord and captains of Assyria! (Holofernes looks up from map with angry face and gesture. Captains take a step forward.) Hear me, my lord! Though thy lips condemn me to death, still shall I love thee, and none but thee! (Sensation among captains. People of Court, near captains, stop laughing and drinking business, and turn with serious concern and watch Arzaele. Holofernes puts map aside.) Now, would I warn thee against this Hebrew woman—this enchantress, who setteth a snare for thee! (Holofernes rises in wrath. Captains become greatly excited. Rest of Court change instantly from gay to serious; all throng down stage watching; alarmed.)

ARZAELE.

Stay your hands, ye captains of Assyria! Mutiny not against my lord Holofernes! (They control themselves; she turns to Holofernes.) My lord, turn not thy sword against thy cap-

tains, who love thee. When this woman came to thee, my lord, thou didst doubt her—didst search her with thine eyes, and examine her at length and severely. And she, having prepared herself for scrutiny and question, bore herself bravely and answered boldly to win her way. Then did she avow that she had left her own people and was loyal to Assyria. But I have devised a trick to reveal her in her reality—to dash from her face the cunning mask of hypocrisy, and to show thee that her wish to live among thy people is but a lie and a sham. (There is great excitement and murmuring; Arzaele takes up tankard.) My lord, and captains, behold this tankard! It containeth the blood of the Hebrew women who were slain at our lord's command this morning. My lord, summon her to attend thee here; then, without hint or warning, pledge her in wine and this blood. Surprise her! If she be true to her own, and false to thee, she will show hatred of thee,—hatred, my lord! And once she showeth hatred, her tongue and countenance can no longer deceive thee to thy discomfiture and thy ridicule. (There is great excitement.)

HOLOFERNES (furiously).

Vagao—bring Judith hither! (There is tremendous excitement.)

HOLOFERNES (seating himself).

Wine!

ZEBDULLA (advances, takes up tankard and wine jar from R. of dais, pours wine and offers tankard).

'Tis half full, my Lord.

HOLOFERNES (accepting tankard).

Well!—(To Arzaele.) Now! (Arzaele comes forward, takes Holofernes' tankard, pours blood from her own tankard into his and hands his to him.)

HOLOFERNES (accepts tankard).

My captains, ye have seen this tankard filled, the first half with wine and the other half with blood?

CAPTAINS.

Aye ! Aye ! (Holofernes puts tankard down beside him.)
Judith, with Vagao, enters R. U. E. veiled and with her
heavy black mantle entirely covering her figure. Abramie
comes behind her. Judith comes near dais and bows low.)

HOLOFERNES.

Woman, come forward and fear not. (She advances.) Raise
thy veil ! (She obeys.) Thou art made this night one of the
daughters of Assyria, who serve in the house of Holofernes.
(Judith bows low.)

JUDITH.

I thank thee, my lord.

HOLOFERNES.

Doth it gratify thy wish ? (Court throngs close.)

JUDITH.

Yea, my lord.—

HOLOFERNES.

And thou hateth the Hebrews and loveth the Assyrians ?

JUDITH.

For ever, my lord. (There is silence and suspense; then
Court throngs closer; then there is silence and rapt attention.)

(Holofernes rises and takes up tankard.)

(All the court watch Judith with severely set faces.)

HOLOFERNES.

Then daughter of Assyria, I pledge thee in wine and the
blood of Hebrew women ! (He drinks.)

(Judith stands erect, smiling lovingly upon him and
with perfect composure. Abramie drops and crouches
trembling at Judith's skirts, and clings instinctively to
Judith. Picture. There is one great movement of

astonishment and pleasure at Judith's smile and demeanour. But Arzaele sinks down with a moan of defeat and despair. Holofernes, after drinking, looks at Judith and drops tankard to floor. His face expresses astonishment, then changes to pleasure. Then he looks at Arzaele with rage.)

ARZAELE (moaning).

Oh! Oh!

HOLOFERNES (savagely to crowd).

Ye are all witnesses of this woman's proposal? (He points to Arzaele, who crouches helplessly and weeps.)

COURT and CAPTAINS.

Yea! Yea! Yea!

HOLOFERNES (to crowd).

Hath not the test proved the loyalty of Judith to Assyria?

COURT and CAPTAINS.

Yea! Yea! Yea! (Judith takes Abramie by the L. hand, raises her, and moves away a few steps towards C. with her. They watch Holofernes.)

HOLOFERNES.

Vagao! take this slave! (He points to Arzaele.) Give her to the lowest soldier in the camp. (Vagao comes to Arzaele, and Arzaele, with downcast eyes, follows him in absolute silence towards R. U. E. Court watches Arzaele. Judith and Abramie look upon ground.)

ARZAELE (up stage R. C. suddenly turns).

Beware of the Hebrew woman! Beware when thou art alone with her! She hideth a weapon in her garments! (The captains, furiously excited, make a movement as if about to rush upon Judith. She faces them with fierce courage, but Abramie in terror shrinks swiftly away several steps towards C. and falls upon her knees.)

HOLOFERNES (restraining them with a forward movement).

Nay, my captains! Leave her with me! (In voice of thunder to whole court.) Away! (All go out.)

(Holofernes sits and leans forward watching Judith. Judith moves to Abramie and raises her.)

ABRAMIE (in fearful whisper).

Dost thou remain?

JUDITH (firmly).

Alone!

ABRAMIE.

Oh, my mistress! Holofernes is drunk with wine and passion. He feasteth his eyes upon thee like a beast that would devour thee.

HOLOFERNES (motioning his hand).

The maid!

JUDITH.

Leave me. (Abramie walks to R. U. E. in absolute silence.)

(Judith, C., looking upon floor. Holofernes watching Judith).

ABRAMIE (in terror, at R. U. E.).

Oh! (Exit Abramie.)

(Holofernes rises, descends from dais, and comes L. of Judith; she looking upon ground.)

HOLOFERNES.

Woman! dost see this sword? (She raises her eyes to his.) Because thou art a woman it shall never harm thee! but if thou hast a weapon—if thou hast poison—thou diest here! (She throws off her veil and mantle; stands forth in dress, skintight to the waist and richly jeweled around breasts, arms, and waist. Below waist her dress is soft and clinging.)

JUDITH (C., holding her arms erect and speaking defiantly).

Search me for this weapon, or this poison!

HOLOFERNES (drawing back, almost voiceless with love and passion).

Oh-h! Queen of women! why hast thou decked thyself? jeweled thy rich beauty?

JUDITH (lowering her arms and speaking with soft graciousness).

My lord, thou didst invite me to the revel, and didst honor me with thy gracious presence.

HOLOFERNES.

Thou didst wish to please me?

JUDITH (same tone).

Whatever pleaseth my lord Holofernes I will do speedily. 'Twill be my joy to please thee till the day of my death.

HOLOFERNES.

Dost thou so honor me? (They cross, he picks up her mantle and holds it on his left arm.)

JUDITH (same tone).

My lord, a woman ever honoreth a prince who trusteth in his own strength, and in the secrecy of his own counsel.

HOLOFERNES.

Thow art as wise as thou art beautiful! (She looks away from him.) Thou turnest thine eyes from me?

JUDITH (looking upon ground).

I would look into thine eyes my lord, and yet, I cannot.

HOLOFERNES (much surprised; hesitates, then asks, wonderingly).

Thou regardest me with thy heart? (He comes towards her.)

JUDITH (looking at him).

My lord, I would tell thee—and yet—I cannot. (Looking upon floor and drawing away a step.) Thy fame is great and goeth everywhere, and I have seen thee, my lord, and thou hast seen me. (She keeps her eyes upon the ground. Holofernes looks at her, his face expressing wonder, then love, then delight. He goes up to couch C., puts mantle upon it, then with eyes fixed on her he returns to her R.)

HOLOFERNES (voice shaken with emotion).

From the first my heart was ravished by thee; my mind was much moved—I greatly desired thy company.

JUDITH (very quietly).

My lord!

HOLOFERNES (passionately).

And now, that thou hast stood the test and been proved true in thy heart to me and Assyria, and hast revealed only thy charms in answer to the slanderer who traduced thee, I tell thee, thou beautiful woman of the Hebrews, that I trust my life and kingdom with thee! Thou shalt be my queen. (Enter Zebdulla R. U. E.)

ZEBDULLA (speaking as he enters).

My lord! (He comes R. C.)

HOLOFERNES.

Who bade thee enter? (He goes towards Zebdulla.)

ZEBDULLA (up stage R. C.).

My lord, thou! All the squadrons are at their posts. Thine own, sword in hand, is falling into rank, and soon come hither. Therefore come I, at thy command, for the signal. (Holofernes walks to R. U. E. and points.)

HOLOFERNES.

My helmet placed upon a lance upon the second hilltop.

JUDITH (aside).

Oh!

ZEBDULLA.

My lord, from that point the whole army will see the signal as one! Thine own squadron will cheer thee, call thee to lead them, as they march past! (Exit Zebdullah R. U. E.)

JUDITH (aside).

Oh! (Holofernes draws the tent close at R. U. E., then stands at R. U. E. and looks at Judith.)

JUDITH (standing statuesque and looking upwards).

Though I stand forlorn and desolate I am delivered out of all fear! (Holofernes comes down a few steps R. C., with his eyes fixed on her. He puts out several candles, thus considerably darkening the stage. Then he looks at her; then at curtains of his chamber L. U. E. He deliberates. Still watching her, he walks half way to curtains and stops.)

HOLOFERNES (up stage L. C.).

She—loveth—me! 'Tis the climax of my supremacy, the very glory of my star! This hour, mine are the victories of love and war! (He disappears through curtains L. U. E. Judith glances around chamber to satisfy herself that she is alone.)

JUDITH (C.).

He hath closed the tent, put out the lights—my time hath come! Oh! Sacred patriotism! Now doth my hatred rage like a fire within me, and my conscience prompteth me 'tis my destiny to preserve my people. At last I am alone with this cruel and bloody monster; and mine is the power of Samson for one course—one action. Blind him with love,—then take his sword! Now do I know why the Great God made me

childless, for if I lose mine honor, the shame stoppeth with myself, but costeth the beast his life. (Looking upward in prayer.) Oh! that it could be my glory to keep my body sacred, and to have his unfulfilled desire run red in his blood before me! (Holofernes enters through curtains L. U. E. and stops at curtains. Judith instantly changes her demeanour to gentleness, and looks modestly R.)

HOLOFERNES (looking towards her, sighs).

Ah! (He draws curtain aside R., revealing the inner tent. He stands holding curtain and watching Judith.)

HOLOFERNES (holding curtain with L. hand).

Come, my bride! my queen! (Judith does not move. He drops curtain and comes towards her.)

HOLOFERNES (advancing).

Come, my beloved, let me lead thee. (She retreats from him.) (Stopping in surprise.) What?

JUDITH (she stoops and speaks in loving tones).

I would converse with thee a little while, my lord; 'tis joy for me to hear thy voice!

HOLOFERNES (in loving tones).

Thy modesty is as beautiful as thy love—I have quenched the lights. (Drums roll afar off.) My squadron! The hour before the dawn will quickly pass! (Advancing and speaking very softly.) Come! Come! My beloved! (She draws away from him two or three steps. He stops angrily, speaks angrily.) Again!—thou!

JUDITH (she stops and interrupts him quickly with soothing tones).

My lord, my beloved, I go with thee, as the woman doth who discovereth and loveth her champion! (His rage leaves him; he looks at her with love.)

HOLOFERNES (after a pause, passionately).

I would crush the world for thee! (He advances.)

JUDITH (with left arm raised towards him).

But—— (He stops.) Wouldst thou pledge me as the bridegroom pledgeth his bride!

HOLOFERNES (passionately).

As the king pledgeth his goddess! (He moves towards table, L. C., where there are golden tankards and sumptuous wine jars.)

JUDITH.

My lord, let me minister to thee.

HOLOFERNES.

Oh-h-h! (Judith walks to table, L. C. Holofernes puts out two more lights on L. Judith takes wine jar and two tankards. The stage is now in weird semi-darkness, all but the inner tent with a bright light hanging, C.) (Holofernes stands back of table; Judith on R.) (Judith fills both tankards.)

JUDITH (handing tankard).

Drink deep of the wine, my lord, as we shall drink deep of our love.

HOLOFERNES (holding up tankard).

Judith! (He drinks to the last drop.)

JUDITH (holding up tankard).

My lord Holofernes! (She pretends to drink, then pours wine back into the jar unseen by him. She again fills tankard. Then speaks with pretended passion). The desire to drink with thee cometh strongly upon me. The fire of the wine playeth wanton with my blood. Pledge me again, my King! Make most merry with me! (She refills both tankards; hands him one then, then raises the other.) Oh, King of Men! My King Holofernes!

HOLOFERNES.

Judith, my Goddess! (He drinks to the last drop; she again pretends to drink, and again returns wine to jar unseen. Holofernes clumsily puts tankard down and reels back from table, with drowsy, drunken manner.)

HOLOFERNES.

Judith, the room reeleth around me! Five days ago I spent ten hours in fighting; since then I scarce have slept—the fumes of the wine oppress my brain—mine eyelids drop heavily for sleep—I would lay my head upon thy bosom!

JUDITH.

Sleep not, O King! this is the hour of our love! Drink to me again! Drink, O King, to thy love and my love! (She again fills the tankards, and, holding her own tankard in her right hand, holds his in her left hand towards him. He staggers about trying to wake himself; then he stands swaying to and fro, and feasting his eyes upon her.)

HOLOFERNES.

Oh-h-h! (He staggers forward, takes tankard and drinks; then drops tankard and stands looking at her, his face horrible, distorted, twitching, with passion. Suddenly his voice breaks forth animal and guttural. During the following speech Judith shrinks down stage C. :) Oh, thou woman of beauty and perfumed passions!—my senses madden as thine eyes hold me! Oh, thou Goddess of the loves of all men and women!—the world hath drunk thee through its eyes, but I shall drink thee through thy kisses and thy desire! (He comes L. of her.) Take now my sword! (He gives her the sword in its scabbard, then kneels on one knee.) For I would worship thee and sword as one; my sword hath brought me fame and glory; thou and thy love and beauty bring me all sweets of paradise! (She becomes very excited; she strives to suppress her excitement. He rises in astonishment with tinge of suspicion.) Judith, thy bosom heaveth!

JUDITH.

With love for thee!

HOLOFERNES (not quite satisfied, speaks with wonder).

And thine eyes flash!

JUDITH.

At joy of thy love for me! (She suppresses her excitement, and smiles calmly and lovingly upon him. His demeanour alters, first to trust, then to joy.)

HOLOFERNES (looking at her as she smiles exclaims with rapture).

Oh! Oh! (Reeling towards chamber L. U. E.) To mine arms! my beloved! To mine arms! To mine arms!

JUDITH (with pretended rapture).

I come, O King!—I come! (Holofernes reaches chamber L. U. E., looks back at Judith for several moments, then disappears, drawing the curtains close in his exit, and thus hiding the inner tent. There is perfect silence; Judith waiting, and watching curtains.)

JUDITH (after a pause, speaks in whisper).

The wine will overcome him!—then he will sleep! (There is perfect silence. She waits a few moments listening.) (In whisper.) He—calleth—me—not!—he—sleepth! (She waits, listens, then steals to curtains and holds them aside, discovering to audience Holofernes asleep upon the bed, his arms, neck and chest bare. A golden lamp hangs above centre of bed. Judith drops curtains, hiding Holofernes, and recoils with horror.)

JUDITH (in horrified whisper).

Oh! (She steals forward in silence and puts out two candles. Then she cautiously draws the sword and puts the scabbard noiselessly down. Then she stands still, holding the

sword before her, with her eyes fixed upon the blade. The silence is intense. Suddenly drums roll a long distance off.) (Starting, with fierce whisper.) His own squadron! (Swiftly raising the sword she rushes through the curtains. As she disappears complete darkness falls upon the stage. There is absolute darkness and silence for a minute. Then, with stage still in darkness, the tramp of the approaching squadron off L. without comes like the rumbling of distant thunder. This lasts a few seconds, working up, gathering intensity at every second. Suddenly the near roll of the drums is heard, and instantaneously with the drums' roll the light falls on curtains, and Judith appears through the curtains and stands at curtains with the blood-stained sword in her right hand, her face deathly white, her eyes dilated with horror.) (The roar of the squadron, worked up to thunder pitch, is now capped by the shouts.)

SQUADRON (without).

Holofernes! Holofernes! Holofernes! (The roar of the squadron diminishes; Judith listening and looking with horror on the blood-stained sword.)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Morning of the Sixth Day.

Scene. The Great Market place of Bethulia, profusely decked with flowers and flags. View of part of city in near distance. Background of mountains. Above mountains, the eastern sky and the grey of dawn. As scene progresses, the sky changes to all the varying tints of dawn; till, with the conclusion of Judith's speech, the sun rises above the mountains and throws his light upon the stage.

Music.

Enter C. grand chorus, boys and girls, singing
Thanksgiving Song.

Enter C. boys blowing silver trumpets.

Enter C. dancing maidens, with peach and other
blossoms.

Enter little girls with cymbals, dancing.

Enter little boys with cymbals, dancing.

Enter young women. Enter young men.

Enter matrons. Enter men. Enter old women. Enter
old men. •

Enter detachments from soldiers of Bethulia.

Enter civil governors. Enter Priest and Levites.

Enter Captains, Rafas and Azarias.

Music. Acclamations.

(Enter C. Judith sitting in chariot drawn by two horses, led by Golthoniel. She is dressed as in Act III, and looks young and beautiful. She stands in chariot with Holofernes' sword, point down; the hilt in her left hand.

JUDITH.

Behold! I have returned with the dawn and this sword is the sword of Holofernes, and with it I cast him upon the floor—dead—and took his head from him. (There is universal consternation.) His sword and head I wrapped in my mantle, and brought them with me through the Assyrian camp. (There are murmurs of wonder and admiration.) I placed the head upon a lance and set it upon yonder mountain. (There is great surprise.) And when the Assyrians saw it, they were stricken with dismay, and fled back to their own country. (There are great shouts and cheering, and people running to her, kissing her hands and robes.) Yet, though I am stained with blood, I am free from dishonor. Though my beauty hath deceived Holofernes to his destruction, neither his hands nor his lips have touched me—so is my beauty without shame! (Sun bursts upon stage. There are cheers, and singing, and dancing and music of cymbals and of harps.)

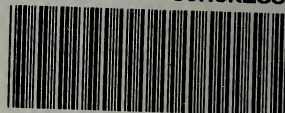
SONG OF THANKSGIVING.

Begin unto my God with Song,
With cymbals and with timbrels join;
Tune unto Him another psalm,
Exalt and glorify His name.
In might of war, Great Assur came
To seize, to burn, to slay, despoil;
But Israel's beauty took his mind
A pris'ner, with a look, a smile.
Great Assur slept; the fauchion passed
By hand of woman, through his neck;
But from his tent fair Israel came
Unharm'd, unsham'd, unwatch'd, uncheck'd.

CURTAIN.

Sept. 10, 1902.

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